COMPUTER GAMES STRATEGY PLUS

IBM PC, CD ROM, Mac, Amiga

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ACES OVER EUROPE
By the Aces of Dynamix

CES REPORT
WINTER CES LAS VEGAS

PLUS
Ringworld
Patriot Tips
Modem Games
Magic Candle III
Alone In the Dark
Velikiye Luki Tips

ISSN 0955-4424
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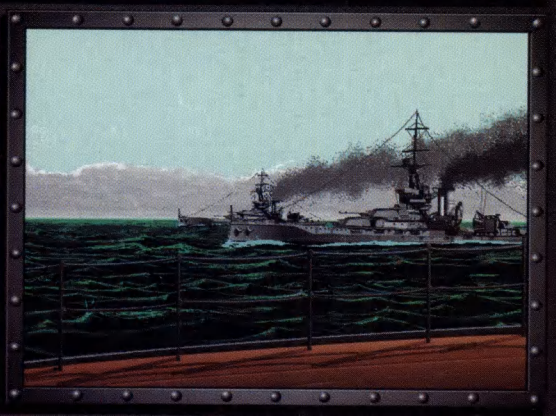
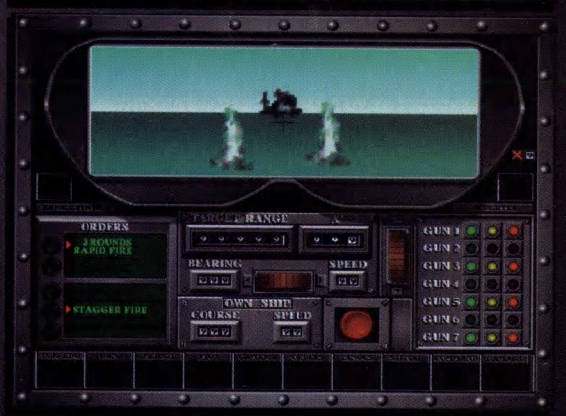
on CD ROM

Ships of Steel, Men of Iron

Jutland





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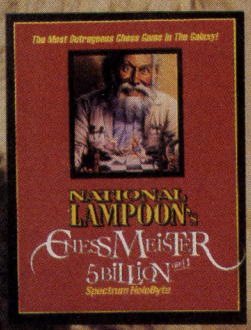

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* HEY, IT WORKED ONCE! *This photo was a Lampoon cover in 1973. We're happy to report the dog died of natural causes.*

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COMPUTER GAMES STRATEGY PLUS

TAKING FUN SERIOUSLY

April 1993 Number 29

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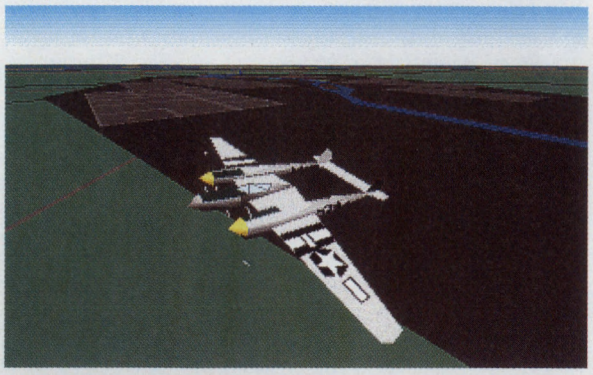

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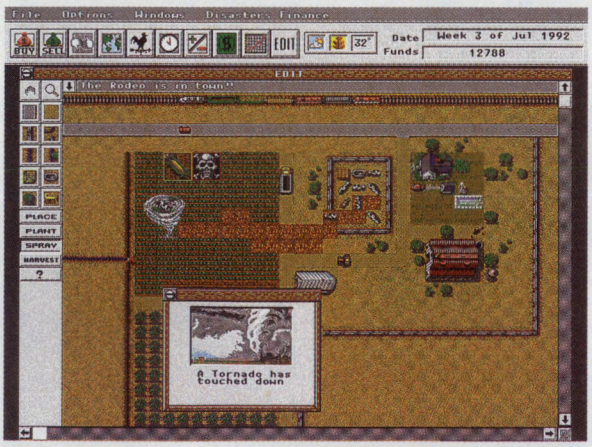

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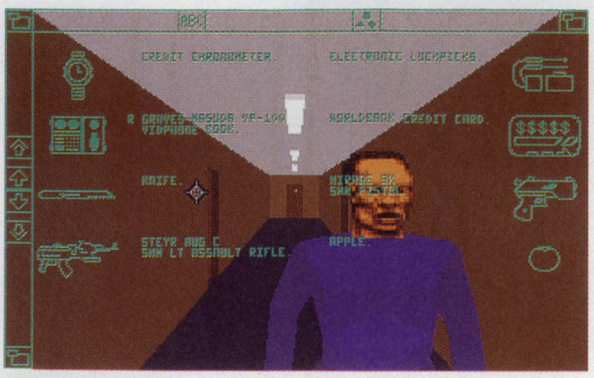

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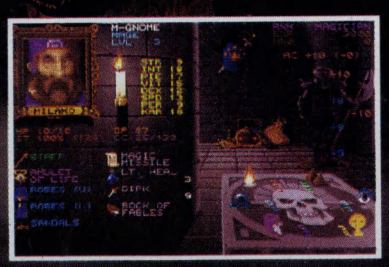

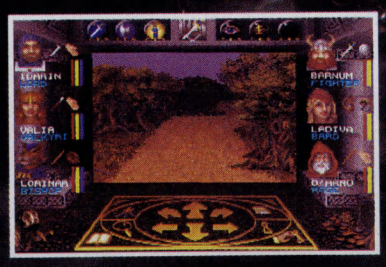

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Winter CES

My first impression upon entering the giant hall that houses the part of the Consumer Electronics Show which falls within the remit of this magazine, was that somehow I had blundered into the wrong location. Instead of being greeted by the peace and serenity that characterises the world of PC games, I felt like I had entered a futuristic shooting gallery. The cause of this mayhem was, as you may have guessed, the world, nay jungle, of video games. The demand, it seems, for recycled Atari and Amiga games from the early eighties continues unabated. Some of the games, such as **Sonic the Hedgehog**, are even being touted as 'environmentally friendly.' Don't be too surprised if Sega get nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

The frenetic speed at which old wine has been poured into new bottles has taken its toll on the PC market. After all, as commercial concerns, software companies naturally want to get their share of what it is comparatively easy money. Combine this with the shift of human resources, and the need to get product out of the door in time for the Christmas market, and it becomes clear why there were fewer PC games than usual at the show.

One of the major trends at the CES was the emergence of CD ROM as a serious format. It seems companies have fessed up to the fact that consumers are not going to spend a wad of dough on what is, after all, just a drive, if the software out there is of the type likely to put even an insomniac to sleep. The only shovelware to be seen in '93 is likely to be of the reverse kind; that is CD ROM games being ported *back* to floppies *sans* major features.

Another welcome trend was the emergence of a new form of hybrid: the strategy role playing game. The incorporation of role playing into strategy games (and vice versa) is something that should have happened long ago. Although its devotees will shriek with horror at it being described thus, Avalon Hill's boardgame **Advanced Squad Leader** contains many elements associated with role playing. At the show, ASCIIWARE's **Dominus** introduced wargaming features into what is nominally a fantasy game, while a new squad level wargame to be released later this year threatens to turn all categories on their head.

On the hardware front, 3DO looks like the real thing. In addition to being a genuinely innovative piece of hardware it has two major things going for it: software support, and the backing of former EA playtester, Trip Hawkins.

But I've left the most important new trend until last: boxes. Surely everyone is tired now of those boring rectangular boxes which fit neatly on the shelf. I mean, how bourgeois can you get? To counter the tiresome vibes which these packages emit, several companies are opting for the 'modern art' approach. A new way to impress your friends. First of the block were Velocity with **Jetfighter II**. This arrived in a piece of cardboard resembling a shrunken pyramid. There was then something of a gap until Nova Logic realised the importance of providing not just a box, but an *objet d'art*. Thus the package that contained **Comanche: Maximum Overkill** left users wondering whether to put it on the shelf or return it to the Guggenheim.

Now Cyber Dreams have joined in the fun. Their new game **Cyber Race** will come in something that looks like a souvenir from Cape Canaveral. Topping it all, though, is the new creation for **Ultrabots** from Electronic Arts. If you can imagine the legs of robot hacked off at the ankles and the remains welded together, then don't hesitate to apply for a job in EA's marketing and packaging department.

Licensed to hype

Although I have had only one complaint about our method of previewing games (which was published), it's perhaps time to elucidate on what exactly we mean by a preview. A preview is designed to give the reader an early look at the game, be it from the designers viewpoint or from screenshots. These stories are not touted as 'exclusives' as we recognise that in a competitive market other magazines have a right to them also. Nor do we cry about it when someone beats us to a story. Perhaps most importantly, a preview is not intended to offer a definitive opinion on the merits or otherwise of a game.

One alternative to this approach would be to publish heavily opinionated previews, and then add a disclaimer along the lines of: 'previews are not intended to take the place of a review as the finished version may include different features' (translation: if the game doesn't live up to our hype then don't blame us). Such riders are no more than self serving get-out clauses that obviate a magazine's responsibility to its readership. In other words, previews as a license to hype. I would add that almost all the games previewed in this magazine are not conveniently 'forgotten,' but reviewed independently and promptly.❑

STRATEGY PLUS INC

PO Box 21
Hancock, VT 05748

Editorial content edited and provided by
Brian Walker
Compuserve: 76711,347

Advertising Manager
US
Gregg Sauter
Tel 802 767 4622

Produced by
Jordan Davies

Fax: (802) 767 4623
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Anything You Want...

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Reader Service No. 107

Three Sixty Withdraw Nazi Dedication

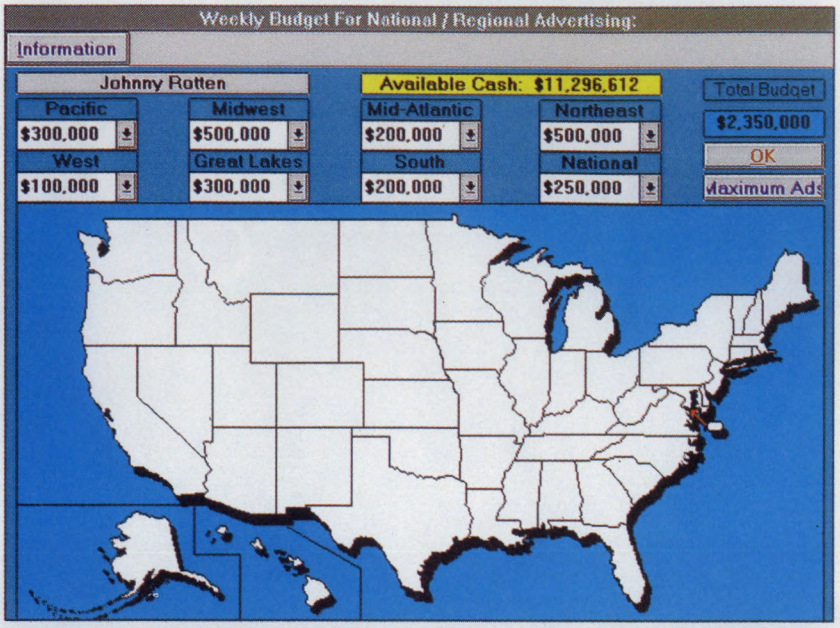
Following representations by this magazine, the dedication to a Nazi soldier which appears at the end of **V For Victory: Velikiye Luki** has been withdrawn. Three Sixty CEO Tom Frisina, who was unaware of the dedication ordered an immediate investigation upon being informed, the results of which produced the withdrawal.

Atomic Games, who developed the game for Three Sixty, say that the dedication was the work of a freelance writer and not an employee of the company, though they accept that they should have been more vigilant. The manual and historical notes for the forthcoming **V For Victory: Operation Market Garden** which were authored by the same writer, is being rewritten and the disparaging references to allied troops and glorification of Nazi efforts removed.

At first sight this case smacks of political correctness, though the issues involved go way beyond the trivial semantics that are the essence of 'PC.' Sensitivity about Nazis has always been high in Europe - public displays of Nazi iconography is banned in some countries. Germany has always been extremely sensitive about what it considers violent games (even the boardgame **RISK** was banned there until quite recently) while Microprose experienced considerable problems with games such as **Gunship 2000**. Since reunification, neo Nazi activities in Germany have been on the increase, even to the extent of producing (illegal) xenophobic computer games which involve capturing jews and transferring them to gas chambers.

Frisina was quick to recognise the ramifications that the Nazi dedication could have: 'Quite apart from the moral issue, it could have been a disaster for the leisure software business in Germany and for the wargaming hobby in general. I'm sure many of our customers in America would find it offensive also.'

Jack Kemp Wins Election Shock!



Power Politics: Kemp and Dole in future shock (horror!)

No sooner than Bill Clinton has got comfy in the White House, comes the news that his tenure is going be limited - a victim of **Power Politics**, it seems. This, of course, is the election simulation from Cineplay. To celebrate the launch of the game the Oregon based company threw a party, and invited several members of the local media and political analysts. The focal point of the evening was a game of **'PP'** based on predicting the results of the '96 election.

On the right, calling the shots for the Jack Kemp/Elizabeth Dole ticket was Oregon pollster Jim Hibbits, plus Cineplay president and well known Democrat, Kellyn Beck. On the left, syndicated cartoonist Jack Ohman and KATU-TV news anchor Melissa Mills pulled the levers for Bill and Al.

The Clinton team started the game with an eight point lead in the polls, but significantly less money in the piggy bank than the (to continue the animal analogy) the fat cat Republicans. The Kemp team ploughed its advertising dough into the seven biggest states and (typically) used negative character ads to attack the president, while Bill and Al stuck to their promise of running a clean campaign.

The Kemp-Dole ticket reached election day with a slight lead in the polls, and as the returns started pouring in from the Northeast (ie Vermont) it was clear that the winner would be in doubt to the last. New York went to Clinton, but Florida went to Kemp who then proceeded to move into the lead by taking most of the southern states. Clinton responded by taking the big Midwestern states.

With only California, Alaska and Hawaii left undecided, Clinton led by a handful of votes. But when the fat lady sang, the Kemp team had won California and the presidency. Final results: Kemp-Dole - 51%. Clinton-Gore - 45%.

Empire's Combat

Empire Strategy announce the release of **Combat Classics**, the simulation compilation ideal for those who time has passed by but who are keen to catch up. Included in the bundle are: **F-15 Strike Eagle II**, the Microprose flight sim that features six different theatres in a '3D environment.' Electronics Arts' **688 Attack Sub** is in there, too, and can lay claim to being the only sub sim to feature a modem option. Completing the collection is Empire's own **Team Yankee**, a tank simulation loosely based on the best selling novel.

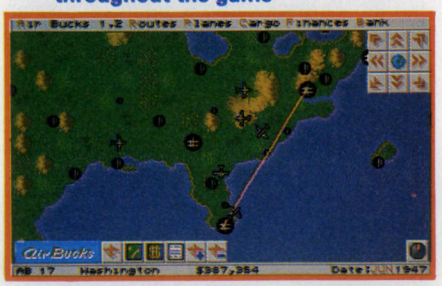
Check out the *New* Air Bucks!

Due to overwhelming response to Air Bucks, Impressions are delighted to announce an upgraded version of the game, to give you, the player, the features you want!

Better Graphics

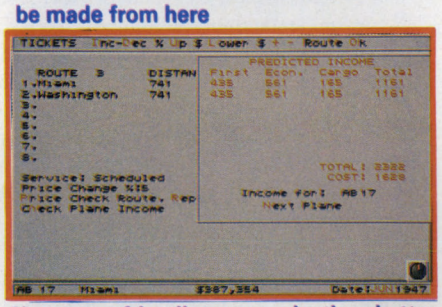
256 color VGA graphics are used throughout the game

Animated Zoom Mode



Watch your planes fly around the world; city selection & all other commands can be made from here

Better Interface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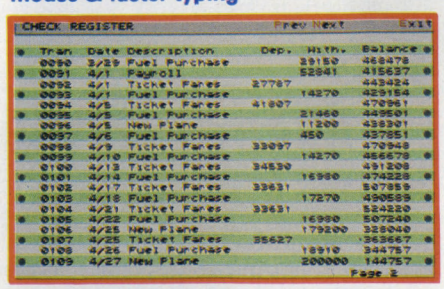

Detailed data on plane demand & costs is easily accessible

Among the many other enhancements made to the game are: ***Upgraded economic model & computer player AI, sound effects, personalisation of airlines, check register, better mouse & typing handling, city sizes now from 1 to 100 & vary thru time, print to paper options & lots more!***

AIR BUCKS v.1.2

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***Impressions** Committed to customer satisfaction in strategy entertainment!*

Sega Out for the Count?

In a decision that has huge ramifications for leisure software companies, The Ninth Circuit Court of appeals today denied both of Sega's requests for a re-hearing in the Sega vs Accolade case. Sega sought to reverse the court's original decision of August 12, which dissolved the District Court's injunction against Accolade, the only independent manufacturer for the Sega Genesis.

In its unanimous decision to deny a re-hearing, Circuit Judges Canby, Reinhardt and Leavy noted: 'The panel has voted to deny ((Sega's) petition for a re-hearing en banc. The full court has been advised of the suggestion for re-hearing en banc and no active judge has requested a vote on whether to re-hear the matter en banc.'

Alan Miller, chairman of Accolade, was understandably delighted: 'Today's announcement further strengthens the ability of American companies to compete in the worldwide video game and computer software industries. The court recognizes that competition spurs innovation, which ultimately benefits consumers and society.'

Sega were still studying the court's ruling at the time of going to press, so it is not known whether they will concede defeat or seek different legal avenues to pursue their case.

Sierraland: where dreams come true

TSN - The Singles Network

Following the news that computer gaming hack Alan Emrich located a wife on The Sierra Network, Sierra confirmed that no less than ten marriages have been arranged on the network. This has prompted the installation of a 'love board' at Sierra HQ upon which are pinned photographs of the happy couples, some of whom have even gone on to work for the network itself.

So far all the marriages have been heterosexual, but a Sierra spokesperson said gays do use the networks including some 'cross dressers.'

The 'cross dressing' occurs when using the 'facemaker' program; women can design a masculine likeness just as men can pretend to be the belle of the ball. The element of invisibility that the network offers is also proving attractive to the disabled and senior citizens alike. Deaf people in particular like the network as their disability is concealed.

Windows 'Prose

Microprose have signed an agreement to publish and distribute the products of the Apriori Corporation, whose specialities are CD ROM and Windows software. One of the first titles to be released under this new agreement will be **Kye Deluxe**, a strategy game for Windows. A sampler version of this game will also be offered on the **Microprose Entertainment Pack Vol 1: Dr Floyd's Desktop Toys for Windows**.

CD ROM releases included **WINCD Professional**, a multimedia utility which combines the features of a CD player with the capabilities of a PC, allowing the user to maintain a complete database of all the CDs in their collection.

CES Sex Tent Shock!

Amazing scenes were witnessed at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas when police were called to a marquee rented by a company calling itself The Video Pleasure Palace and Book Store. Several convention delegates were arrested for participating in scenes which even the most hardened members of the LVPD said were 'too disgusting to describe.'

The trouble began when several couples hired by the 'Pleasure Palace' began engaging in live sex but as tends to happen in such circumstances, things quickly got out of hand. The crowd of onlookers, who had gathered to watch what was turning into one of the Electronics Show's more unusual demonstrations, were invited to join in the orgy. The resultant stampede apparently brought to mind the phrase about not wanting to stand in the way of Howard Hughes and a dropped nickel.

It is not known whether any members of the leisure software industry were among those arrested, but it was noted that several *Strategy Plus* staffers were absent from subsequent press conferences.

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- Battles take place in space & on surface of both planets
- Random planet generator for great replay value
- *Designed* as a 2 player game!

Impressions *Committed to customer satisfaction in strategy entertainment!*

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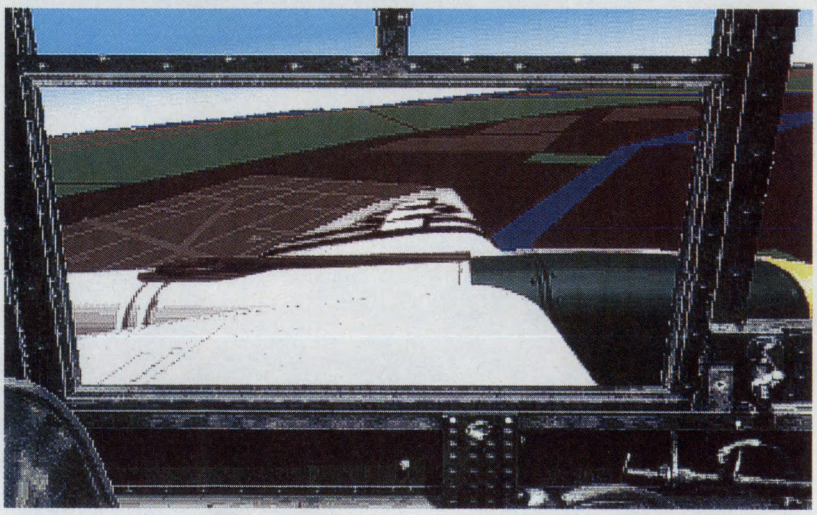
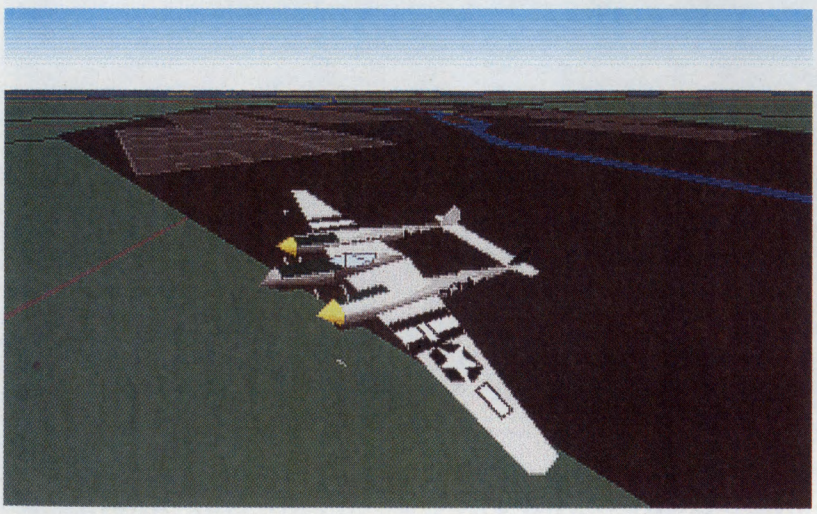
ACES OVER EUROPE

Preview by Dynamix' Chris Chen





June 1944. The US Forces are island hopping in the Pacific towards Japan. War is also raging half way across the world in Europe. The Allied Invasion of Normandy has just begun. Hitler has declared war on America causing the US to join Great Britain in an attempt to crush the Nazi Empire. Thus begins **Aces Over Europe**, the sequel to Damon Slye's **Aces of the Pacific**.

Covering the period from June of 1944 through May 8, 1945, **Aces over Europe** (**AOE**) chronicles the events from the invasion of Normandy, D-Day, the liberation of Paris, the Battle of the Bulge to the the final German surrender which marked the end of war in the Europe.

The planes

Pilots will fly in the German Luftwaffe, the U.S. Air Force and Great Britain's Royal Air Force, engaging in both air-to-air and air-to-ground based battles. As in **Aces of the Pacific**, pilots have a wide variety of aircraft to fly and experience. For the Luftwaffe, the Messerschmitt 109, the Focke-Wulf 190, the Junkers Ju. 88, the Messerschmitt 262, and the Arado 234B light bomber are among the available aircraft.

For the British, the Hawker Typhoon and Tempest, the Supermarine Spitfire, the DeHaviland Mosquito are included along with numerous model variations. On the U.S. side, the P-51D Mustang, the P-38J Lightning, the P-47D Thunderbolt, the Martin B-26 Marauder, the Boeing B-17G Flying Fortress and the B-24J Liberator are all involved.

Slye and the '**Aces**' team have primarily focused on enhancements to the existing system, some major, some minor.

The graphics

Graphically **AOE** is like **Aces of the Pacific** on steroids. Gouraud shading (industry buzz term) means that polygons blend together through the use of connective shadings. Also new is extensive texture mapping and a new 320 X 400

graphics mode that Dynamix calls 'Tall Res.'

The planes in **AOE** now have rounded edges, squadron insignias and flight position markings, camoflage, and a smoother look thanks to the new Tall Res graphics. The simulation shell, which houses the menus, pilot records and mission screens, has also received a significant face lift.

The simulation

The heart of any good flight simulation is the realistic modeling of the aircraft. **AOE** features improvements in this area over our previous efforts (a great many of which are based upon customer requests following the release of **Aces over the Pacific**). New aircraft characteristics are spins, screen shakes and flap and landing gear damage at high speeds. The AI for both sides has also been improved (yes, that means wingmen, too).

Along with aircraft and AI changes, **AOE** features new air-to-ground attacks. Pilots will fly against moving ground targets such as trains, tanks, truck convoys and half tracks and stationary targets such as V1 rocket sights, radar installations, bridges and munitions depots.

The missions

Three new mission types have been added that focus on the air-to-ground scenarios.

'Crossbow' features pilots from either the USAF or RAF targeting V1 buzz bomb sites and radar installations. 'Close Support' focuses on bombing action near the front lines, while 'Interdiction' means going after trains, bridges and convoys to destroy enemy supply lines. All of these mission types can be played as a single mission, or as an integral part of the Career mode.

With the addition of ground attack missions, the detail and variety of terrain and land based objects has been enhanced from previous games in this series. Featuring more ground detail than seen hitherto, **AOE** portrays a more varied and realistic world. Bridges, cities, and European landmarks (such as the Eiffel Tower) now populate what was a fairly sparse terrain in **Aces of the Pacific**, and provide a whole range of new targets for those with an itchy trigger finger (*and for Francophobes - Ed).*

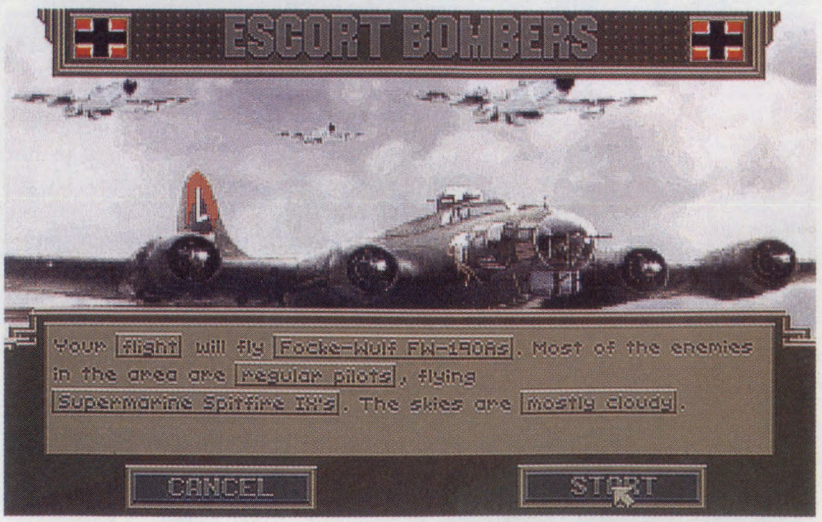
The speed of the 3Space system has also been increased. Thanks to this increase, the frame rate of **AOE** will be comparable to that of **AOTP** even with the increased detail levels. Another improvement is a revamping of the mission generator which creates nearly all of the simulation's scenarios. After **AOTP**, a serious rewrite of the mission builder code was undertaken, adding greater intelligence to the system and more randomly generated elements. The result is missions which are historically more accurate and varied.

A small technical addition worth mentioning: Squadron and Flight Position markings are now included. Historically accurate illustrations and markings will now allow pilots to *visually* identify who they're flying against and the importance of an enemy plane in its flight. Tally Ho! ❑

***Aces Over Europe** is scheduled for an April release by Dynamix*

SUPERMARINE SPITFIRE XIV
The Spitfire XIV was one of the greatest World War II piston-engined fighters. It was the first Spitfire mark to enter production with a Griffen engine, which proved to be a much better powerplant than the legendary Merlin.
STATS
PREVIOUS
NEXT
CONTINUE

MESSERSCHMITT 262
The first jet fighter ever to see combat, the Bf-262 shocked the Allies whenever they encountered it. With a top speed of 540 mph, it could outrun anything in the sky. It served in limited numbers starting in late 1944.
STATS
PREVIOUS
NEXT
CONTINUE


ESCORT BOMBERS
Your flight will fly Focke-Wulf FW-190As. Most of the enemies in the area are regular pilots, flying Supermarine Spitfire IXs. The skies are mostly cloudy.
CANCEL
START

The Blue & The Gray

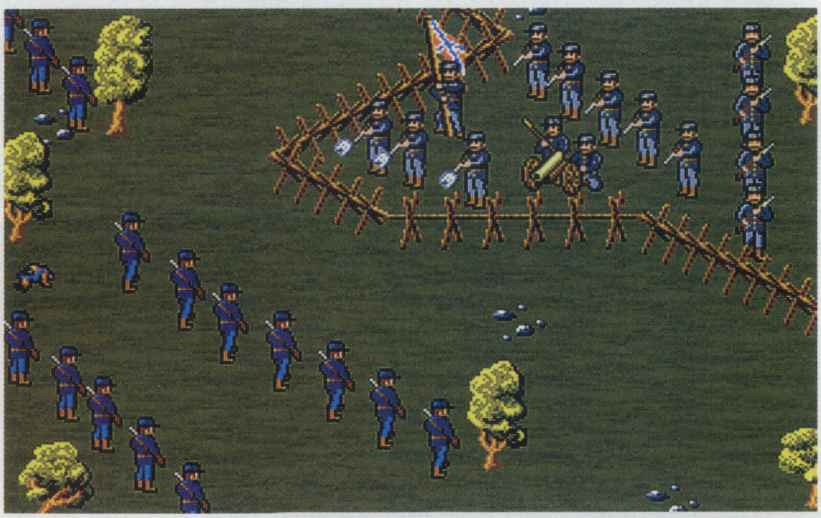
Design notes by Impression's Edward Grabowski

The objective in designing **The Blue and the Grey** was to create a simulation which covers the whole of the Civil War. Starting in April 1861, the player can control either side and continue the fight until victory. Players will not only command armies strategically, but also will be able to direct units tactically in the latest, significantly different version of the Micro Miniatures series.

Large scale

Armies will be made up of the same numbers as in the real war with the introduction of extra troops limited to the quantities that joined historically. Similarly, the quality of weapons will change through time to reflect not only the improved armory available, but also the mix of weapons of the two sides.

In order to have a chance of winning, the South, with fewer men to call on and less financial resources, will need to



achieve a quick victory by winning the early battles. The North must at first hang on, until their strength in numbers and equipment grows to be equal to and subsequently greater than the South. The geographical scope of the game is large, covering an area from the Midwest to the East coast and from Florida up to New York. Transportation by rail or river will be catered for with terrain type will affecting travel times.

When two Armies meet, a Micro-Miniatures battle will take place. The battlefield will be generated by the computer using the scrolling strategic map as the basis for the terrain. The Armies and their initial start positions will also be generated, with one figure representing around 25 men. These figures will be grouped together to form companies, consisting of either 4 or 5 figures. The companies will be placed together to form Battalions of around 30 figures (approximately 750 troops).

As in the real war, the number of units will decrease through time. The Battalions will, be left with around 20 figures (500 men) in the later stages of the war. Battalions will have an experience rating which will grow as they fight battles. In addition, morale data will be kept and carried forward after combat. Each figure (up to 25 men) is capable of holding a different weapon; fresh weapons will be issued as time passes.

Players will be able to customize the game by naming individual battalions. There will also be a variety of authentic uniforms available for selection. The 'real-time' artificial intelligence will be tailored to follow the Military training of the day with loose column 'waves,' skirmishers and heavy fortification playing a large role for the infantry. The will be Cavalry be used more as an 'army in motion.'

The role of the Navy

One cannot forget the importance of the United States Navy in the outcome of the war. Its main function for the North was the 'blockading' of Southern ports; the blockade is in quotes because the US Navy was hard pressed to cover all 3,500 miles of Southern coastline. However, they were quite successful and coupled with its ability to transport troops, the Navy adds a significant strategic element to the War.

Primarily control of Naval units will be on the lower level (scrollable strategic) map, with sea battles being resolved at this stage. It is possible that the Micro-Miniatures system could be expanded to allow naval battles to take place within the system, although this is undecided at the time of writing.

Disease, as the biggest killer of men in the conflict, must be included in any simulation of this scope. The effects of disease can be reduced by the player by maintaining good supplies, but it cannot be eradicated. It is estimated that 60% of the 360,000 casualties for the Union and 66% of the 260,000 Confederate losses were caused by disease.

A problem with a simulation that recreates the whole of the Civil War and gives total control of the armies to a player, is that the famed historical battles, such as Gettysburg, are unlikely to arise. There will undoubtedly be equally large battles but at different locations and with different Armies. Many players will undoubtedly want to recreate historical battles using the Micro-Miniatures real-time gaming system. To remedy this the game will allow certain 'pre-set' historical battles to be fought instead of playing the complete game. The pre-set battles will not come with the main program but will be released separately on data disks.❑

*Impressions say that **The Blue and the Grey** will be released for the IBM PC in the first quarter of this year. A review will follow shortly*

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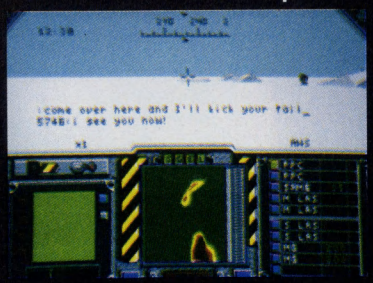

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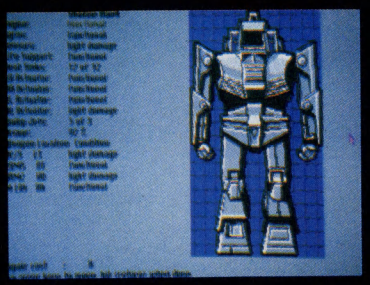

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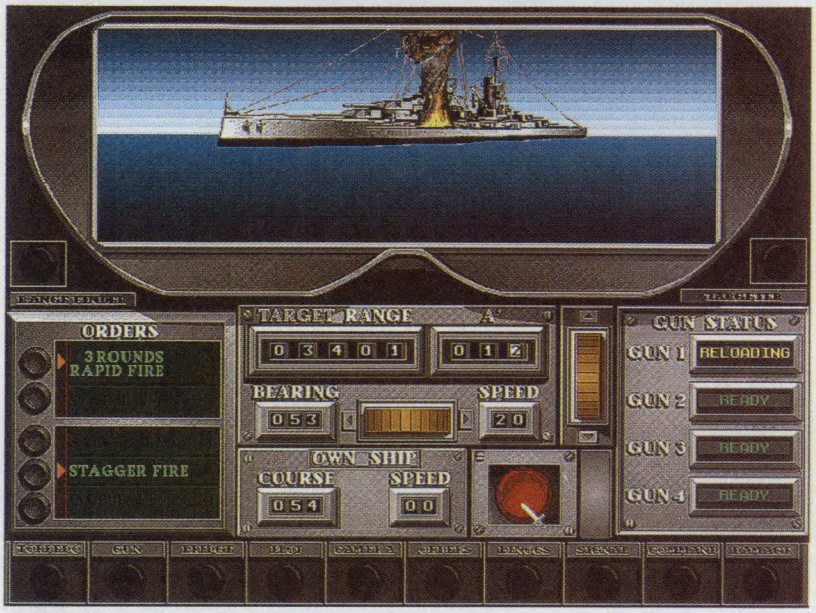
CD Magic?

Brian Walker looks into some Software Sorcery



No sooner does our writer Sandy Eisen bemoan the lack of a 'killer game' for CD ROM, than along comes a new company with four titles all containing the potential to be placed in that category. Software Sorcery, while new to the CD ROM arena, have produced one game on floppy disks - **Sea Rogue**, the treasure hunting simulation published by Microprose last year and a game. A game that was generally well thought of, not least for the amount of research that went into it.

Software Sorcery was founded by James and Kathy Jones in 1989. James is a bit of an old salt, hence the nautical flavor of some of the titles. The switch to CD ROM came about partly because putting mutli-megabyte games onto floppy disks was not considered feasible. Another reason was the dearth of good CD ROM games.'It's either shovelware or maps of Timbukto' said product co-ordinator Margaret Kennerly when discussing the abysmal range of software available on the silver shiny. She's certainly in good company when expressing this view, as EA chairman Trip Hawkins has been saying exactly the same thing recently.

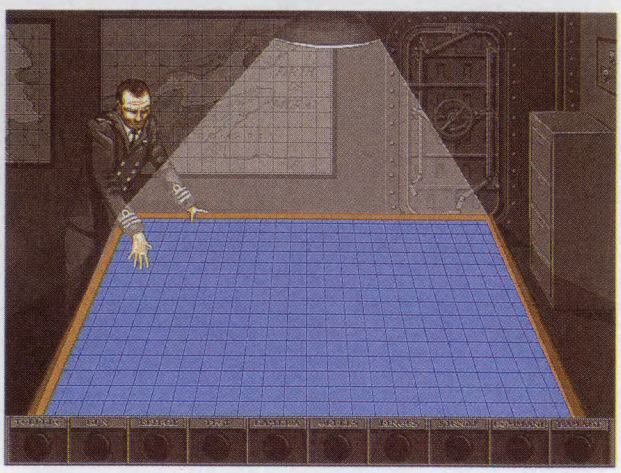
The first release, which should be available now, will be **Jutland**, and although this is the first naval simulation on CD ROM there's nothing really startling about this. What is surprising is that it is a *World War I* naval game. It's somewhat ironic that a simulation of one the most archaic of recent wars should be the first to appear on such a high tech format. Ms Kennerly says the choice was quite simple: 'There have been so many World War II naval games out there recently we thought we'd do something different.'

Nuts and bolts detail

Played at command level, **Jutland** lets the player take command of a single warship or the entire fleet in the famous and controversial Battle of Jutland - one of the biggest naval battles in history, resulting in the loss of 25 ships and over 8,000 lives. Both sides claimed victory, but the truth is that nobody won. Like **Sea Rogue** before it, much work has gone into historical accuracy, right down to the weight of shots fired by the old steel tubs. The 'nut and bolts' brigade (hallo, Matt Sentell) should at least be satisfied.

Software Sorcery say that the storage capacity of CD ROM has been used to the hilt. Digitized video of newsreel footage, rendered 3D graphics, cinematic sequences all in 256 color SVGA graphics, account for quite a few megabytes. Over 100 missions are included with the game which will feature both tactical and strategic combat.

The strategic side of the game takes in supply factors as well as war bonds, the sale of which can raise money for new ships. Night combat will be a big part of the game with gun



flashes and shells wailing as they fly by. In what is, perhaps, the first example of reverse shovelware, **Jutland** will be released in a pared down floppy version later this year.

From the old to new, as it were. **Aegis: Guardians of the Fleet** is a modern naval game featuring the Falklands and Libyan conflicts, amongst others. The program, it is claimed, is based upon 'unclassified military information and historical accounts of the actual battles.' Like its aforementioned predecessor, '**Aegis**' will have the same multimedia trimmings. In fact, it uses the same game engine but will also have diplomatic options. Both games will be 'challenging' says Ms Kennerly. 'We didn't want to make it so difficult where players give up, but at the same time we realise that no one want to buy a game where they can win straight away.' If the games gain consumer acceptance, then a series of land based simulations is planned.

Clang!

The company's name suggests a leaning towards things that go clang in the dungeon, and sure enough a role playing game forms part of their inventory. **Fantasy Fiefdom** is a single character role playing game set in the days when men were men and girls wore girdles. Like the aforementioned naval simulations, much work has gone into historical accuracy. Armor and weaponry of the period were the subject of intensive research. Dragons proved more of a problem.

As is fashionable these days, the storyline is non linear. Players are encouraged to explore and undertake mini-quests in their bid to rule the land. A character generator is provided so no one need fear being stuck with some computer generated jellyhead. Owing to the size of the game it's unlikely that it will appear on floppies.

Dead Zone Jr has nothing to do with the Stephen King novel of (almost) the same name, but represents Software Sorcery's foray into science fiction role-playing. The eponymous zone refers to an intergalactic junkyard which turns out to the ignominious birthplace of the player's alter ego - Junior.

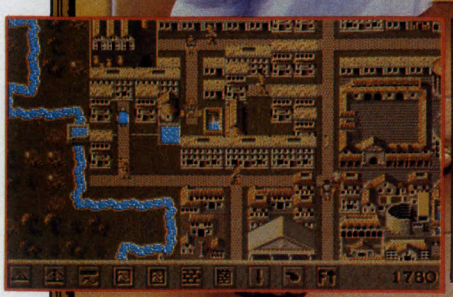
The only way out of this space ghetto is to escape, but getting down on all fours and burrowing away like a demented bunny is unlikely to help. A spaceship is what's needed. But Junior remembers the old saying 'once a junkie always a junkie', so off he goes down to the yard and before you can say 'Robby the Robot,' he's up to his neck in scrap metal. Not the most scientific way to build a craft capable of supersonic flight, perhaps, but it beats panhandling.

If Software Sorcery can come up with the gaming magic to make these titles equal to the technology that produced them, then a CD ROM drive could be the first item on those ever changing wish lists.❑

*Software Sorcery say that **Jutland** will be released in March followed closely by **Aegis**. **Fantasy Fiefdom** and **Dead Zone Jr** are scheduled for release in the 2nd quarter of this year.*

CAESAR™

ROME WASN'T BUILT IN A DAY - HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE YOU?



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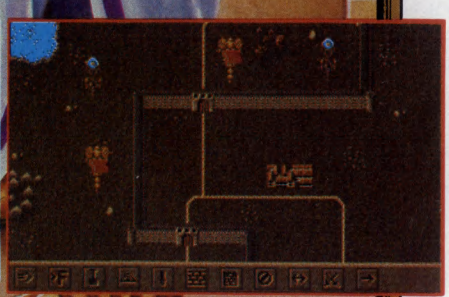
Battles may also be fought out in detailed, animated combat using a much enhanced version of Impressions' Cohort (Cohort II will be available separately).



Keep out hostile tribes with cross-country walls to match The Great Wall of China

Impressions

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Spectrum HoloByte's CD Romper!

No more street maps of San Jose. No more encyclopedias detailing the mating habits of the spotted wombat of Mongolia. CD ROM is for real! That's the message from the Consumer Electronics Show as more and more companies offer simultaneous and enhanced CD ROM versions of DOS based games. One of the first of the new generation of games will, in fact, be CD ROM only. **Iron Helix**, from Spectrum HoloByte is described as a 'cross between **Pac Man** and **Alien**' which, if nothing else, leaves a lot of room for manouvre.

Iron Helix was created by Drew Pictures Inc and is rendered entirely in full-color photorealistic 3D animation. The story is set in a cold war future where a biological weapon threatens to touch off a galactic holocaust. To prevent this, the maze-like starship carrying the weapon must be destroyed. All the action takes place on board the starship with the player speeding through corridors, shafts and lifts attempting to find clues while avoiding the ship's deadly security drone. The graphics throughout and the soundtrack are first rate and the action, while a tad arcade flavored, is non stop.

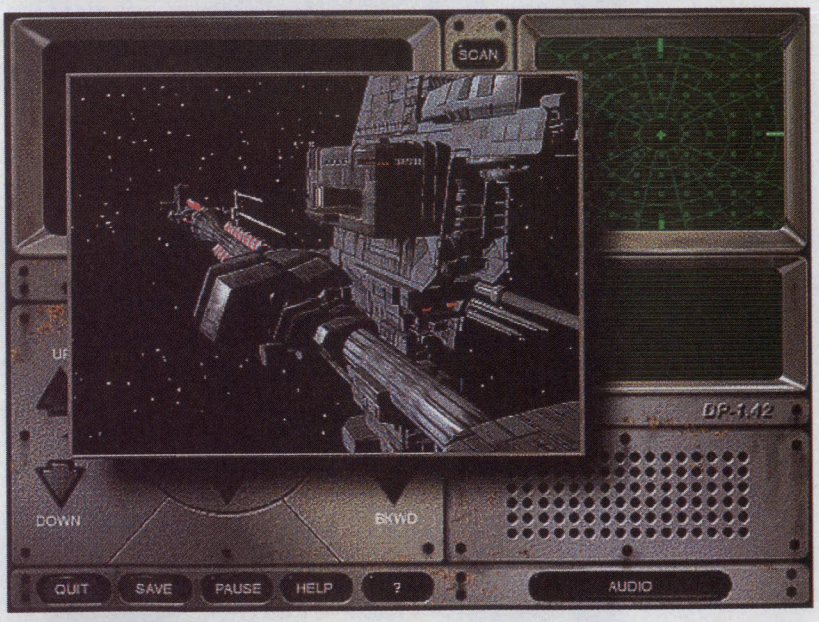
The creative director of Drew Pictures is Richard Cohen, who was one of the principal animators on Arnie's *Terminator 2*. Cohen sees **Iron Helix** as one of the first of many 'mini-movies' that will be appearing on CD ROM. 'I'll be creating special effects for what may become *desk-top* light and magic,' he says.

On the floppy front, Spectrum HoloByte will shortly releasing **Tornado**, which was designed by Dave Marshall and his team at Digital Integration back in the UK. A preview of this appeared in issue 14.

Chess programs seems to be all the go nowadays and SH leap on the bandwagon with **National Lampoon's ChessMeister 5 Billion and 1**. In any word association test, it is doubtful that chess would be the first word to spring to mind in conjunction with *National Lampoon*. But this new program is a spoof aimed at taking on Interplay's **Battlechess** market, rather than Gary Kasparov. SH say the game will feature live-action 3D graphics in fully animated 'adult-oriented' situations' (oo-er!). Also included with the game are two basic sets: 'bawdy' and 'boring.' Bawdy contains the aforementioned adult-oriented situations of the type that I'm sure no reader of this magazine would be interested in. The boring set is, well, boring.

Contrary to our report in the last issue that Spectrum claimed that this program would 'beat anything,' they in fact claimed nothing of the kind (we made it up!). It is, however, one of the strangest programs of its kind (though they don't claim that, either).

Coming later this year will be a PC port of the best selling Sega title **David Robinson NBA Action**. This will feature: 28 team rosters, individual stats, instant replays, crowd noises, and temper tantrums from overpaid athletes (?). Work-in-progress at Spectrum HoloByte includes: **Star Trek: The Next Generation** and **Warthog A-10**.❑



Iron Helix: my generation

National Chessmeister 5 Billion and 1: blimey!

WINTER CES LAS VEGAS

Report by Brian Walker

Electronic Arts' Tactical Comeback

Seal Team

WINTER CES LAS VEGAS

After being one of the major players in the PC market for so long, EA appear to have dropped the ball in the past year as only a sprinkling of PC releases (by their standards) appeared under their auspices. In 1993, though, they have picked it up again as they had one of the most exciting looking ranges at the show.

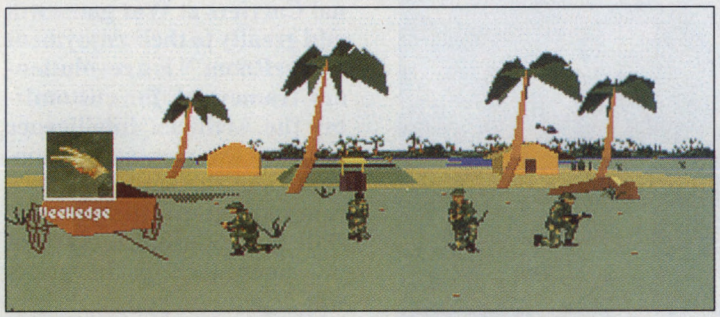
The first of their new releases will be **Seal Team**, a tactical wargame set in the Mekong Delta. This is something of a surprise, to say the least, as it looked like EA had abandoned this genre long ago. But a wargame it most certainly is and from what I saw, a very good one.

In total there are 80 missions in the game, all historical and based on combat reports provided by the UDT-SEAL Museum Association. The squad consists of four combat

specialists each with individual skills, on hand is a wide variety of weapons to choose from to compliment these skills. The view is both first and third person combined with multiple external views. There are also personnel stats which are updated after each mission.

Seal Team looks like the start of a mini-trend: squad level tactical wargames combined with the type of character identification and statistics hitherto reserved for role playing. The only surprise is that such a merger took so long to occur, after all, Avalon Hill pioneered this concept years ago with their **Squad Leader** and **Ambush** boardgames.

EA's UK office has been hard at work and looks set to make major contributions to their US parent. Yet another tactical game, this time set in space will make its appearance this spring. **Space Hulk** is a conversion of the best selling Games Workshop boardgame, and the computer version looks all set to emulate it. Basically this is another *Aliens* variant - run around a labyrinthine ship in attempt to try and



Seal Team

avoid being eaten by ol' steel chops, but the graphics and SFX should lift it out of the stereotypical rut.

Bullfrog finally appear to have got **Populous** out of their system and are set to unleash their first ever game that was developed specifically for the PC rather than the Amiga. **Syndicate** has many of the familiar Bullfrog hallmarks, the most obvious of which is the creation of a complete and consistent world. The world in this context has been divided up into three giant camps: Europe, America, and Asia. In order to control the plebs, one of the camps has invented a mind chip - small microchips that when inserted into the cranium will have the unfortunate recipient believing he is someone, something, or somewhere else.

Law and order is otherwise maintained by mind-altered police, controlled by company agents who's main task it is to make the company money. The player's role in all this is take on the job of Marketing Director of one of their own Megacorp and directly control company agents. The ultimate goal is to control all 50 cities in the 'new' America.

At first sight, **Syndicate** looks like the hybrid to end them all. Part role-playing, part tactical wargame, part business game, and a few adventure elements thrown in for good measure. While the potential to be criticised for being neither fish nor fowl is omnipresent, Bullfrog look to have got the mix exactly right in what could be their best game to date. One bonus feature will be that the game can accommodate up to eight players over a network. A modem option will probably be included also, but at the time of writing this is unconfirmed.

Our adventure game of the year, **The Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes**, will shortly be available in a CD ROM version. Enhancements will include full motion video and digitized sound throughout the game. **Gary Kasparov's Gambit**, which complete's EA's line-up for the first half of '93, will be discussed in our next issue.❑

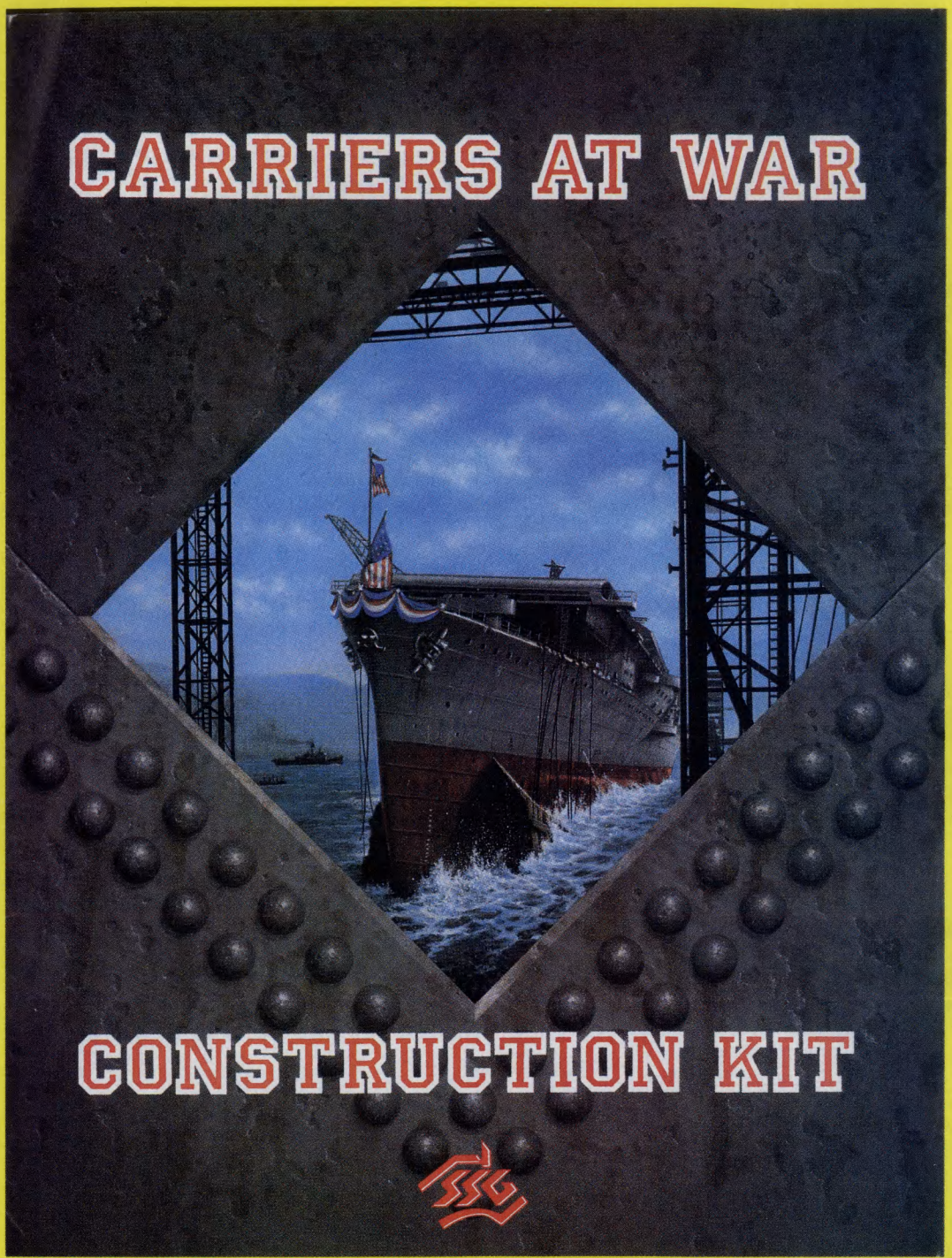
TWO YEARS AGO...
THE FWS UNION DEPARTS FOR
TAU CETI III VIA
THE HYPERSPACE BOOSTER

Following years of instability and chaos - with the Federated Worlds (FW) and the United Democratic Planets (UDP) vying for superiority in the Local Group - in 2374 CE the hyperspace booster at Cetus Amicus was certified operational. The FW, eager to reestablish contact with the mysteriously silent Home Cluster, dispatched the FWS Union, under the command of Alex Seward, to use the booster to travel to Tau Ceti III - the location of the Home Cluster's booster. Captain Seward completed his mission, overcoming saboteurs and xenophobic locals, and uncovered the truth about the discontinuance of Development Assistance to the Local Group. Seward's findings led to an investigation by the Federated Worlds Special Forces' Intelligence Division (FSWF-ID). It was discovered that a conspiracy had been going on during those fifty two years of non-contact, involving high-level officials in not only the Home Cluster, but also in the Local Group. With members of both the FW and UDP governments implicated, both sides grew mistrustful and hostile. Following several military incidents, the UDP declared war on the Federated Worlds.

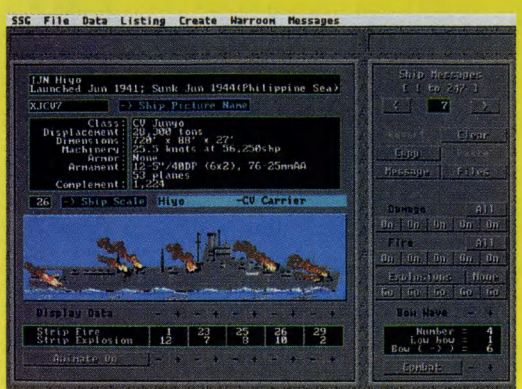
To Be Continued...

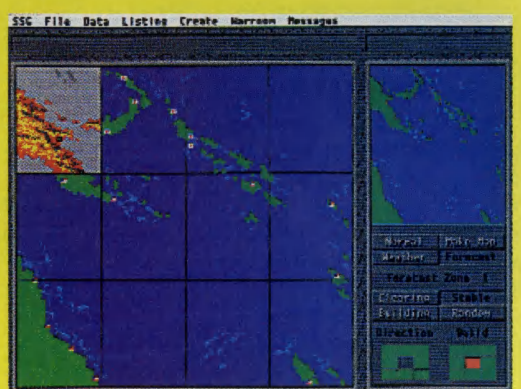
The War escalates this Spring

OMNITREND
SOFTWARE



WAKE ISLAND **GUADALCANAL** **TARAWA**





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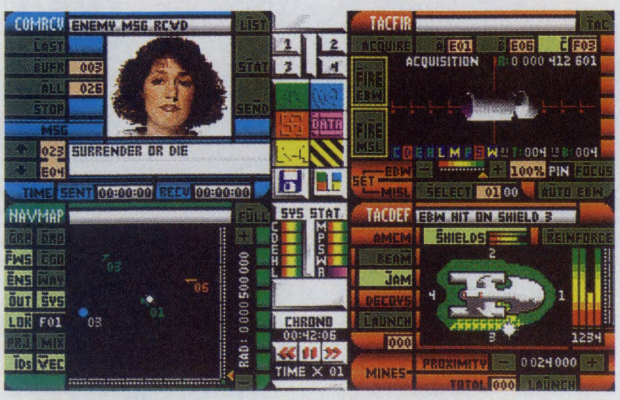
Reader Service No. 25

Impressions goes Into the Breach

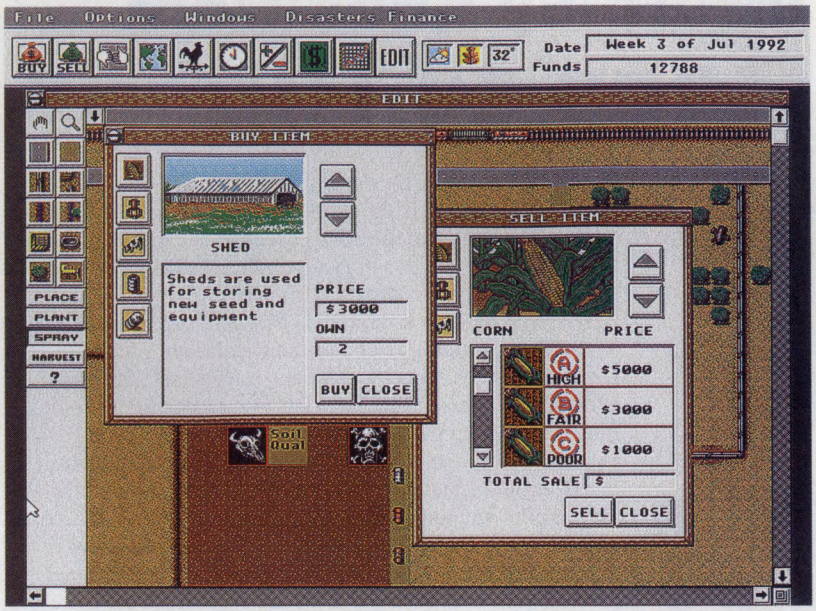
No one at Impressions (not even their PR dept) envisaged the sort of success the company would have when they set up shop in Conneticut last year. **Air Bucks** was an instant hit for them and provided the encouragment so essential to new companies. The new year sees the company targetting the US market more clearly by developing on the PC rather than the Amiga, still the dominant computer games platform in Europe.

One of their first releases this year will be **When Two Worlds War**, a strategy game involving intergalatic development. Combat not only takes place on the planets, but also in the gap in between (commonly known as space). Like most Impressions games, **When Two Worlds War** occurs in real-time. Many players have qualms about this, but there can be no doubting its suitability for modem play and this is precisely what **When Two Worlds War** will offer - the first Impressions game to do so. In addition there will be a scenario builder, 256 color VGA graphics, the option to personalise planet names and squads, and a stat compiler for pilots. Impressions are also working with Aria to include voice recognition in the game.

Another strategic space combat game from Impressions is **Rules of Engagement 2**, produced in conjunctuon with Omnitrend. Like its predecessor, this is a real-time game set in space and one which will contain the facility to load and run scenarios from **Breach 2**, and the forthcoming **Breach 3**, at certain points in the game. **The Blue and the Grey,** Impressions' civil wargame is the subject of a design notes piece by Edward Grabowski in this issue. I mentioned to David Lester, CEO of Impressions, that I thought the game would look better in hi res EGA rather than opting for the more colorful but lower resolution of VGA. Any opinion on this would be welcome both by myself and by Impressions. Coming soon: **Caesar** and **Air Bucks 2**.❑



Rules of Engagement 2: real-time space



Sim Farm: the 'country cousin'

Maxis goes Down on the Farm

Maxis can always be counted on to come up with something different and sure enough, sitting alongside their electronic fish tank (**El Fish**) was their latest oddity **Sim Farm**. Unlike the dense **Sim Earth**, this is more along the lines of their seminal **Sim City** and is even described as that game's 'country cousin.'

As the name suggests, the player takes on the role of the farm manager who must plough fields, buy sow seeds, buy livestock, harvest crops, get up at 4am. The simulation has a very strong financial model that includes the futures market, loans, and taxes. The farm may be run ruthlessly using chemical fertilizers, or using more environmentally sound measures.

Twenty-four different crops are available, each with their own planting, sprouting, growing, harvesting and storage models. There is also a climate model that takes in floods, dust storms and tornados. Machinery includes: tractors, ploughs, harvesters, trucks, cropdusters, silos, barns and windmills. When visiting the town, rodeos and shooting galleries are available for one's enjoyment.

The point-click-and-build interface is very much like **Sim City** as are the graphics. As with all Maxis 'software toys' the 'game' element is somewhat marginal, though the financial side of the game should produce a stiff challenge. Coming soon: **El Fish** and **Rome: Pathway to Glory**.❑

WINTER CES LAS VEGAS

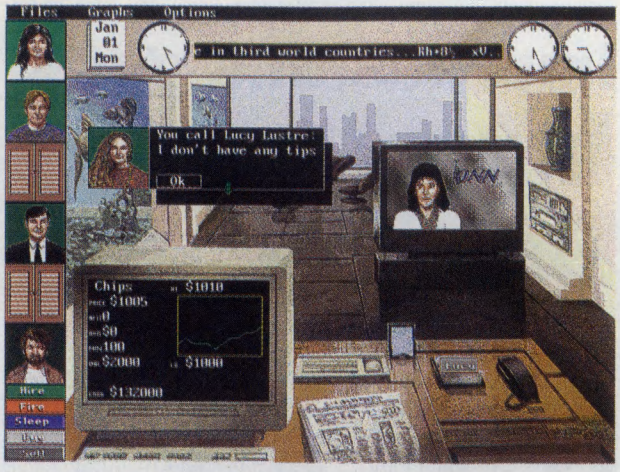
Interplay goes from Rags to Riches

WINTER CES LAS VEGAS

While the origins of most software houses are humble, it should be pointed out that the **Rags to Riches** of the above headline is the title of Interplay's new stock market simulation, and not a description of the company's progress (or is it?).

The game was co-developed by Leigh Ardley upon whose **Speculation** boardgame the simulation is based. Starting with a few bucks and a one room shack, the player attempts to become obscenely rich by methods fair or foul. Interplay say that the game contains historically accurate events for the great market crash of '29. Several levels of competition are included and opponents that vary, and for players who wouldn't know a bond from a brick wall, there is an on-screen help guide. To get away from graphs showing things going up and down, Interplay have scanned original paintings into SVGA artwork. Sound support for the more vociferous traders is also included.

Interplay's big title this year, however, is likely to be **Stone Key**. This is a spectacular dungeon game featuring graphics and sound likely to set a new standard. Despite throwing a party to celebrate its first appearance, the company is being very tight lipped regarding any further publicity. The game is not scheduled for release until next Christmas, so anyone looking for further information should just keep on buying the mag (says our accountant) in the hope that something will turn up.



Rags to Riches: shocks and scares

The **Battlechess** series soldiers on, both on CD ROM and floppy. On the subject of CD ROM, Interplay are into this format big time. Enhanced versions of **Lord of the Rings**, **Star Trek 25th Anniversary** and **Sim City** are all on the way. The **Star Trek** game will feature the voices of actors William Shatner and Leonard Nimoy.❑

How to STOP playing The
1. Bowling ball falls down ramps.
2. Bowling ball tips see-saw, pulling string.
3. String pulls switch, turning on light bulb.
4. Light shines through the magnifying glass, lighting rocket.
5. Rocket lights fuse, exploding dynamite.
6. Dynamite explodes, pushing pail off ledge.
7. Pail pulls string, shooting gun.
8. Bullet bursts balloon.
9. Bucket falls on hamster cage, making hamster run.
Puzzle Game of the Year
Computer Game Review
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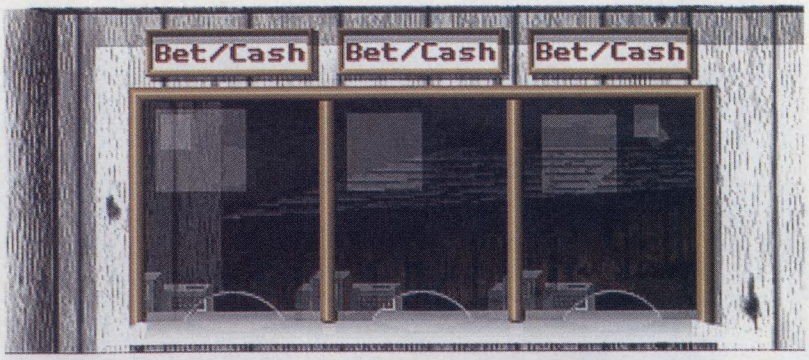
Microleague plan a Blood Bowl

Microleague, hitherto best known for their sports sims, have been diversifying of late. **Laser Squad** is just one result of their exploration of new genre. This is a tactical wargame for one or two players that inhabits the same sort of gaming terrain as **Breach 2** and **Tegel's Mercenaries**. Form a squad, buy weapons, meet aliens, kill them.

Readers familiar with Games Workshop's product range may recall that their **Blood Bowl** game was one of their most popular titles. This is a fantasy football game that numbers ogres, elves, and zombies among its protagonists. Such was its popularity amongst board gamers that leagues were formed and several expansion kits issued.

The only flaw in the game was constantly having to cross reference numerous charts to find out if Edgar Elf really did score a touchdown before being crushed to death by Oscar Ogre, but just as the computer has taken the drudgery out of wargames, thus is should do the same for games like **Blood Bowl**. To facilitate tournament play, Microleague say that modem play will be supported.

Microleague's more conventional sports games include



(above) Quarter Pole: the sport of kings

Quarter Pole, a very welcome horse racing simulation. Welcome because the 'sport of kings' has been neglected apart from Onmi-Play's wonderful **Horse Racing**.❑

WINTER CES LAS VEGAS

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13. Motor starts fan, pushing tennis ball off ledge.

14. Tennis ball trips see-saw, sending bowling ball crashing onto *your* computer.

11. Scissors cut balloon string.

10. Jack-in-the-box pops up, hitting scissors.

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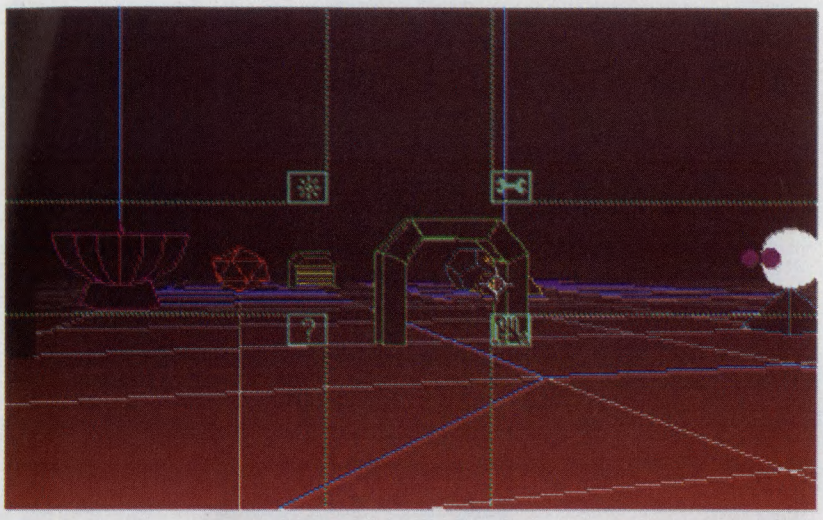

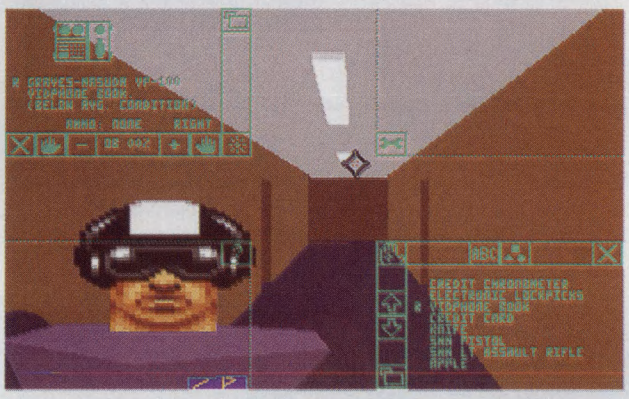

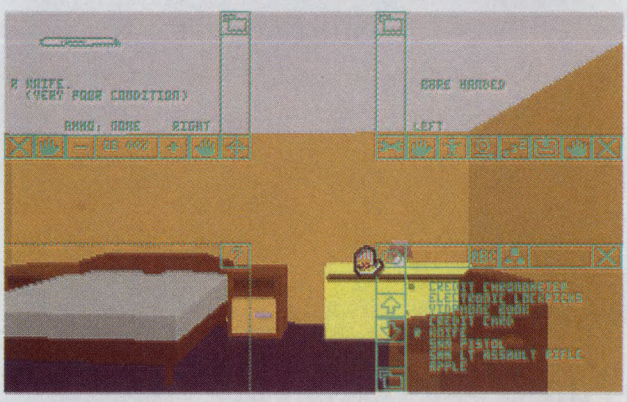

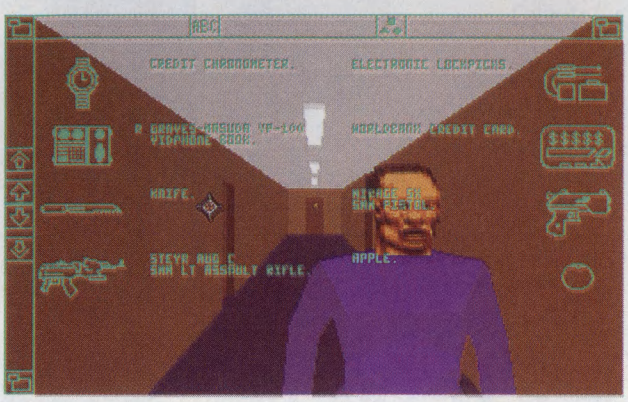

Empire Strategy's Cyberspace

The sleepy university town of Oxford is not somewhere that one would immediately associate with the futuristic world of cyberspace. But it is within this hive of academia that the development team known as ODE can be found working on **Cyberspace**, a conversion of the pen and paper role playing game published by Iron Crown Enterprises (ICE). ODE's last major work was on the **Team Yankee** games published by Empire Strategy, the same company that will be publishing **Cyberspace**.

It's somewhat ironic that the majority of games for what is essentially a computer generated world, are cardboard rather than silicon based. Interplay's **Neuromancer** and Activision's **Circuit's Edge** spring to mind, but these are dwarfed by the products from boardgame publishers like West End, FASA, and R Talsorian whose **Cyberpunk** remains the seminal game on the subject.

Cyberspace, set in the year 2090, looks like being the first computer game to tackle the subject on its own terms rather than trying make it conform to (role playing/adventure) genre conventions. Much work has gone into the interface, for example. In particular, to try and retain the suspension of disbelief that one is not merely peering into the monitor, but is actually a part of the cyberworld unfolding before one's eyes. The Heads-Up-Display (HUD) offers a first person perspective that can be customised according to taste. The design logic being that the interface should be an extension of the cyber enhanced character. There will be no inventory screens or control panels, or indeed anything that is not consistent with the cyberworld reality.

The playing area is a city containing 10,000 buildings, all laid out in a grid system of streets and avenues. The buildings contains rooms and floors all displayed from a 3D perspective. Within this city lies yet another level of reality: cyberspace itself. The player can access this world within a world by logging on to a computer terminal. The citizens in the primary world are made up of a combination of polygons (for the body and clothes) and bitmaps (for the head, to allow more detail).

All characters in the game may be approached and the responses will vary. Some characters will be helpful, some will be hostile. The game itself, while containing a main scenario, is decidedly non linear. The design aim is to encourage players to explore the cyberworld and to try and master the many sub-plots en route. Lurking behind the scenes, attempting to obstruct human progress, will be the computer in the role of Games Master. The sub plots are the heart of the game system and offer, amongst other things, a wide variety of career choices: courier, private eye, streetfighter, too.

The combat system is a mixture of skill and reflexes. Combat results are modified by character attributes, but at the same time being quick on the mouse draw is equally important. ODE say that combat does not form a major part of the game but for those whose blood lust is unquenchable, security guards have been provided as cannon fodder. Sampled sounds, a character generator, and some smooth animation complete what looks to be welcome foray into the neglected netherworld known as cyber.❑

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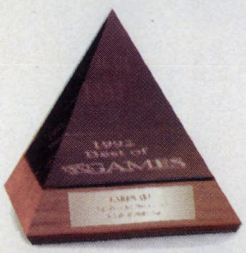

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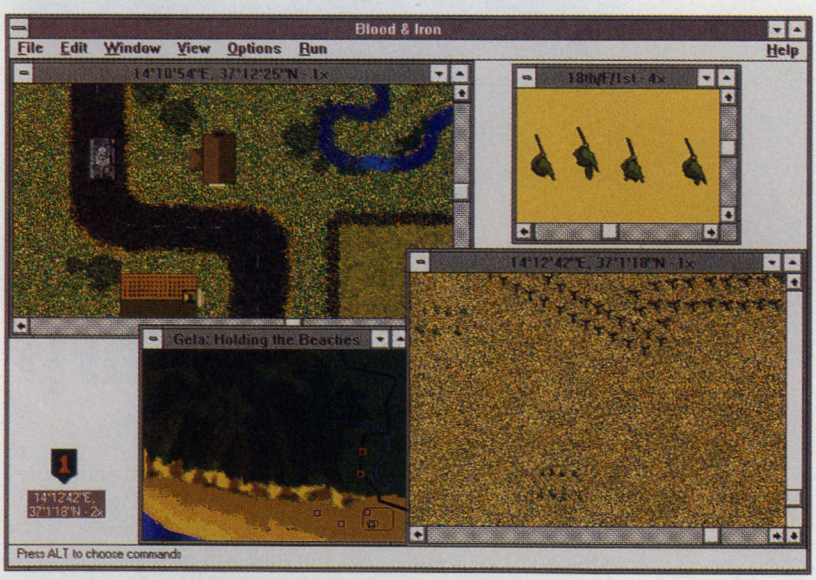
Twin Dolphins Make a splash

New companies are always welcome in the software business and they don't come any newer, or stranger sounding, than Twin Dolphins Inc. Behind the name, however, lies a core of industry veterans. For example, producer Paul Meyer worked for Origin Systems where he helped develop such games as **Martian Dreams**, and **Ultima VII**. His current project is **Blood and Iron: Battles of the Big Red One**, a multimedia wargame designed to run under Windows and one which will be available on CD ROM as well as floppies. The already planned follow-up to **Battles of the Big Red One** will feature the Pacific theatre.

'**The Big Red One**' is a WWII squad level game featuring tactical real-time battles interspersed with digitized newsreels from the period. The CD ROM version will feature a cinematic voiceover. The game has been designed so that it can be configured to please novices and hardened veterans alike. Fog of war and hidden movement can be toggled on or off according to taste. **Blood and Iron** is intended as a modular system that will make use of Windows DLL to produce files that may be incorporated into the master program. For example, modem and network upgrades will be available in this format shortly after the product ships. Producer Meyer had some interesting things to say about Three Sixty's **V for Victory** series: 'Why Would anyone would want to design a game like that,' he proclaims, 'it's too much like a boardgame. Maybe it will sell 10,000 copies to all the people who bought SPI games, but we're aiming for a lot more than that.'

All is not war and worry at Twin Dolphin, however. Their second release will be **Forgotten Castle**, an adventure game (or rather a 'fantasy interactive movie') that is being produced by our old friend and grammar expert (see letters, issue 28), Jeff Groteboer, who previously worked for SSI on such titles as **Shadow Sorcerer** and **Carrier Force**. Prior to that Groteboer had extensive experience in the boardgame business with GDW and Avalon Hill. As if this wasn't enough he's also cranked out three books, proof that he is capable of spinning a good yarn. Just make sure there are no typos in the manual, Jeff.



Blood and Iron: The Big Red One

The yarn in question, **Forgotten Castle**, supports SVGA and what is described as an 'invisible, common-sense interface.' Although the emphasis is on storytelling there is combat in the game, the speed of which can be adjusted to suit all reflexes. The fully animated characters and monsters were created using Autodesk 3D Studio. Digitized sound effects, a full musical score, and a first person point of view complete the picture which, at this point in time, looks very pretty indeed.❑

WINTER CES LAS VEGAS

(above) Kronolog: time in a tizzy

There's Merit In a Time Warp

Nazis, it seems, are coming out of the woodwork these days. Here they are again in **Kronolog: The Nazi Paradox**, a new adventure game from Merit courtesy of Castleworks. The storyline will be familiar to anyone on browsing terms with Philip K Dick's *Man in the High Castle* which offered the hypothesis that the Axis had won the war and that the Nazis and the Japanese were running the show from San Francisco.

In **Kronolog**, it is the Nazis who are controlling America after winning the war. A situation which puts Mark Hoffman in the sort of tizzy that heroes are prone to experience: *he knows too much!* Perhaps because of this knowledge mass, things start to get a bit hazy, and before you can say 'back to the future' he finds himself 50 miles north of Munich in the year immediately prior to World War II.

Krononlog claims several new features such as PIM - the players own personal information manager which stores information collected during the game. An original soundtrack, 3D animation and over 85 locations complete the story.❑

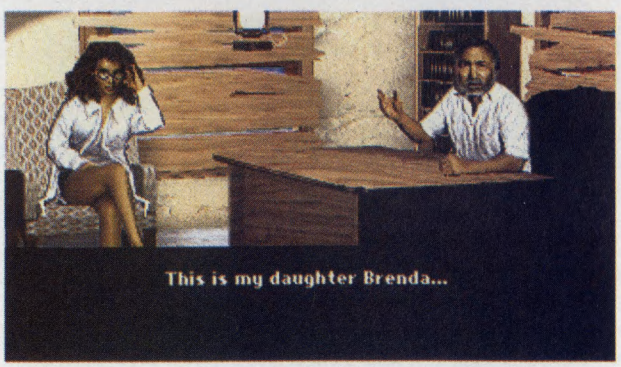
Sir Tech's Black Eye

The name Sir Tech has become virtually synonymous with the **Wizardry** series. But now the company is seeking to capitalise on the outstanding success of this cycle with **Realms of Arkania**, a German developed fantasy role playing game based upon the best selling pen and paper game in that country, ***Das Schwarze Auge*** (The Black Eye to you, sir). This series has spawned some 70 adventures and more than a dozen boardgames. The first story to be released by Sir Tech will be **Blade of Destiny**. Features include:12 different character classes, 7 attributes, a detailed skill system, animate combat using a 3D isometric display, an 80 spell magic system, the phased time system of traditional role playing all in 256 color VGA and with a full musical accompaniment.

Although not an intensive experience as the **Wizardry** series, **Realms of Arkania** should appeal to traditional role-players as the computer version was designed to replicate the pen and paper system as closely as possible.

When I last met up with Sir Tech in Las Vegas, they had in their comfy little suite an enthusiastic fellow by the name of Iain Currie. The source of his fervour was **Ambush**, a modest looking strategy game which at that time vaguely resembled SSG's **Warlords**. Why then, does it now make one think of **Strike Commander**? 'Well, we've added a few things,' adds Currie with characteristic modesty. The intro to the game announces the arrival of a 'strategic roleplaying management resource game.' At first I thought this was an attempt at irony - a marketing tactic to leave no base uncovered. But no. It's serious, and what's more the game looks to make good the claim.

The adventure-style story is non linear so that the game will be eminently replayable. The role playing element comes when controlling a squad of 8 separate mercenaries, each with different abilities. The battles are real-time and are combined with 3D cinematic sequences. In between all the aggro, there's harvests which must be managed in order to garner revenue. Fifty different playing areas will be included with the game which will also contain a musical score. Doesn't exactly sit neatly in the filing cabinet, does it? **Ambush** is only the working title of what could be one of the surprise hits of the year.❑



Ambush: meet Brenda

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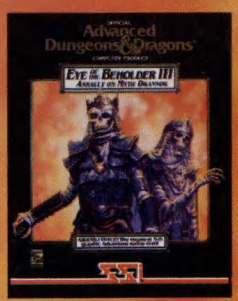

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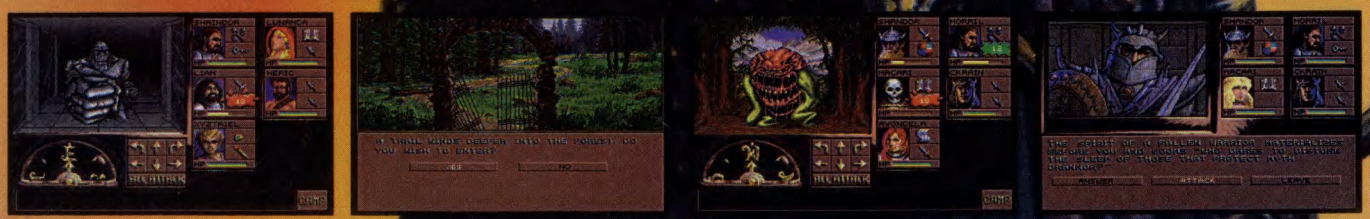

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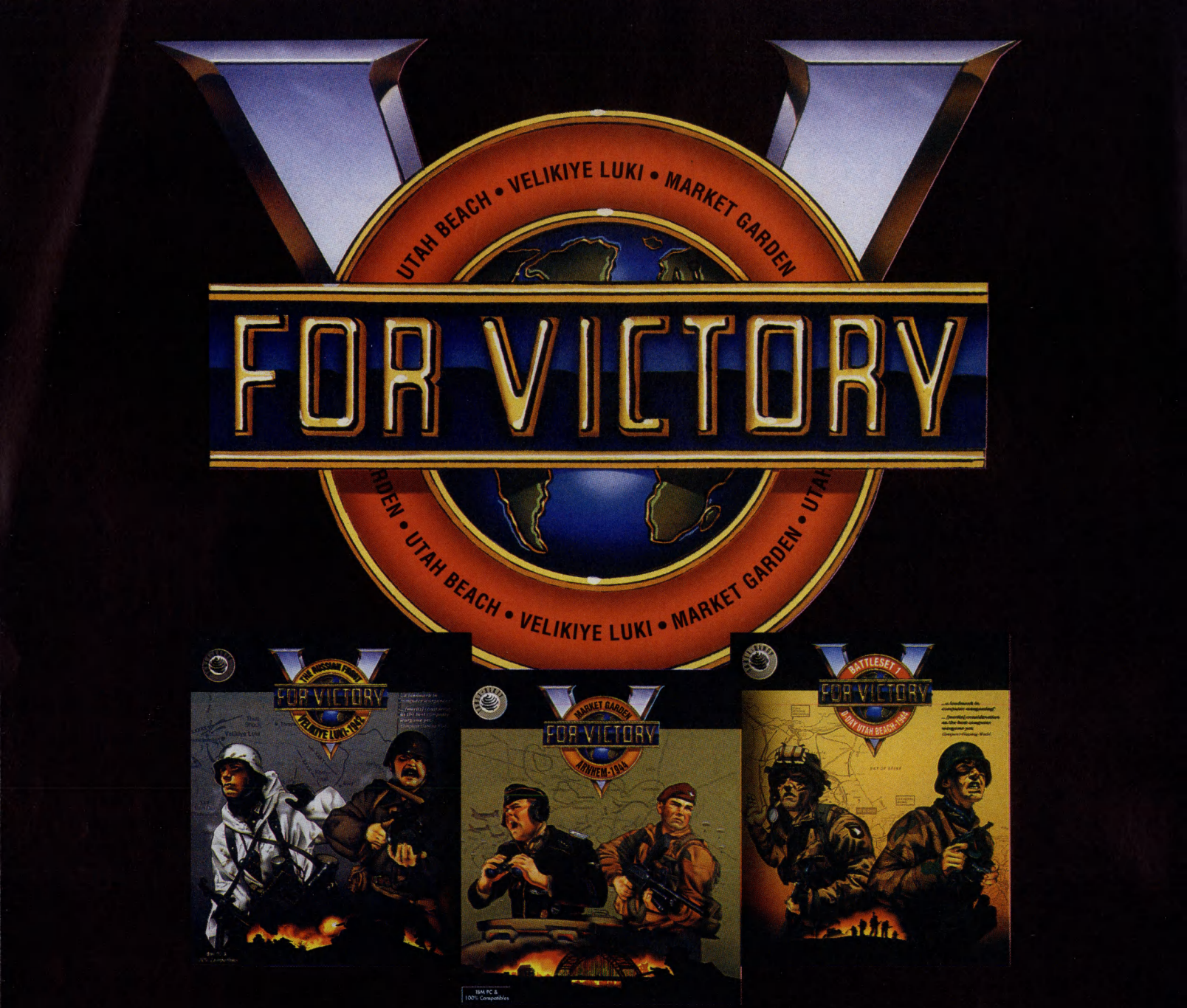

WARGAMING WITHOUT COMPROMISE

Strategy Plus Game of the Year - V FOR VICTORY: UTAH BEACH

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HOLY MO! IT'S... 3DO

Just what the world needs, a new platform, right? Right, especially if that platform happens to be 3DO. The 3DO Interactive Multiplayer is the brainchild of R J Mical and David Needle who between them designed the Atari Lynx. Needle was also the hardware architect for Commodore's Amiga 1000.

The 3DO company was formed by Electronic Arts chairman Trip Hawkins who now enjoys the status of visionary guru of the leisure software business. A look at 3DO's strategic partners quickly suggests that the Interactive Multiplayer is not intended to be a here-today-gone-tomorrow piece of gadgetry: Matsushita; AT&T; Time Warner; MCA, and, of course, Electronic Arts are all on board. These are the players. Now let's look at the player.

Speed of flight

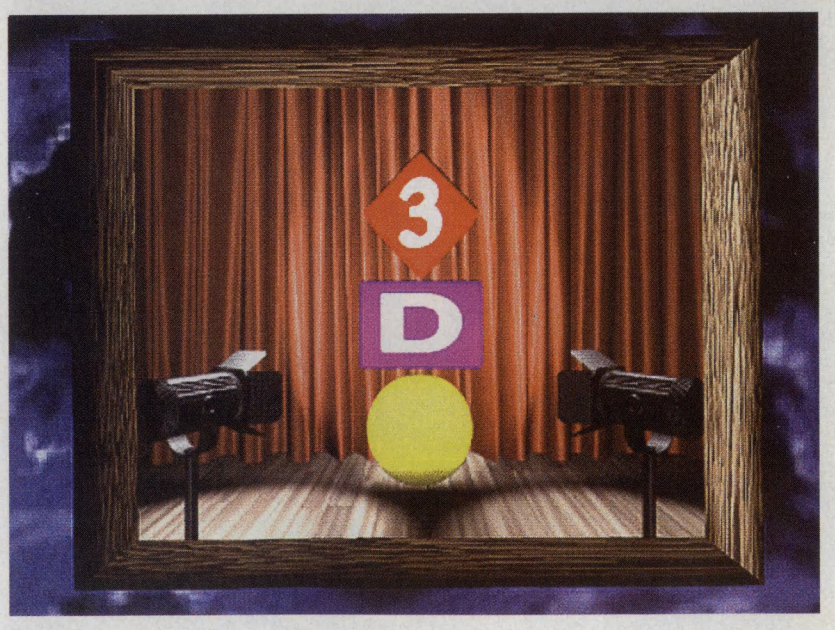
The Multiplayer is basically a CD ROM drive with a proprietary format, however, it can read standard CD ROM disks, though other CD ROM drives will not be able to read 3DO disks. It will also be able to read Kodak's Photo CD Disks, audio CDs, and digital movies once these become available. With a 50Mhz, 32 bit CPU, 3DO is capable of offering fantastic frame rates. The double speed drive that the 3DO system offers can deliver faster access and twice the transfer rates of other CD drives. 'Images are rendered faster than the eye can see,' claims Hawkins. Certainly the images I saw being rendered at the CES were definitely a bit nippy, but then these were being loaded from RAM. The real test will come when the same images are loaded from disk.

The souped-up 32-bit chip means that the palette is now no longer restricted to the 16 colors afforded by 16-bit. There is also a plug-in module that will offer full motion video, threatening to make 'interactive movies' a reality rather than just being part of the lexicon of marketing man. Or as Hawkins puts it: 'The 3DO breakthrough puts all the emphasis on delivering real-time graphics power, as a result we have much more power than a conventional 32-bit system.'

Animation is achieved by using what 3DO describe as a 'cel' system that is not bound by the usual limitations of sprites. 3DO's animation cels have more in common with Hollywood production techniques where animators use layer upon layer of artwork to provide realistic visual depth.

The first 'Multiplayers' will feature software-based motion video, which will provide full-screen video at 30 frames per second with more than 100,000 colors. The full motion video upgrade chip which 3DO say will be 'inexpensive', can be plugged in to provide VHS digital video quality. Of course none of this will mean anything if no one develops for the machine. But is here that 3DO have made a smart move. Development kits are being handed out free and already software houses such as Microprose, Origin, and Sierra On-Line have announced that they will be supporting 3DO. Domark confirmed to me that their **Harrier** flight sim

Stage 1



Frame 1

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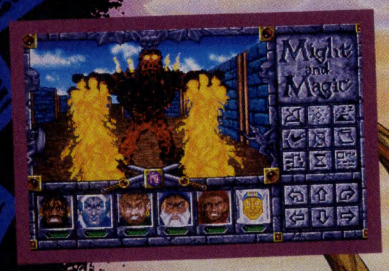

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will appear on the new format.

Software licensees can take comfort from the fact the 3DO development system is based on that used for the Mac platform. This includes emulation software and programming and authoring tools. 3DO can also provide licensees with a digital content library of 170 CDs of Hollywood-style sound effects, musical scores, film clips, and photographs (without copyright fees). Already 3DO say that their content library comprises 111 gigabytes (on 170 CD ROM disks) of music, film, and text references. All this will be available free to developers to include in their game or whatever.

Playback can be through a standard TV monitor while the audio promises to offer pseudo surround-sound. 3DO architecture employs a digital signal processor unit that is capable of offering high quality digital sound. In addition, a technique called 3D Audio Imaging will make sound not just move from left to right, but from front to rear (and vice versa) when headphones are worn. Just plug the system into the stereo and feel those walls move. As much as the machine promises, even in first generation mode, there is more to come. Add-ons will include:

- Cockpit-style joysticks for flying and driving sims.
- Modems
- 3D glasses
- A memory card for saving games
- Peripherals for connecting home video cameras.
- Midi connectors
- Upgrades to the architecture itself, such as advanced sound technology

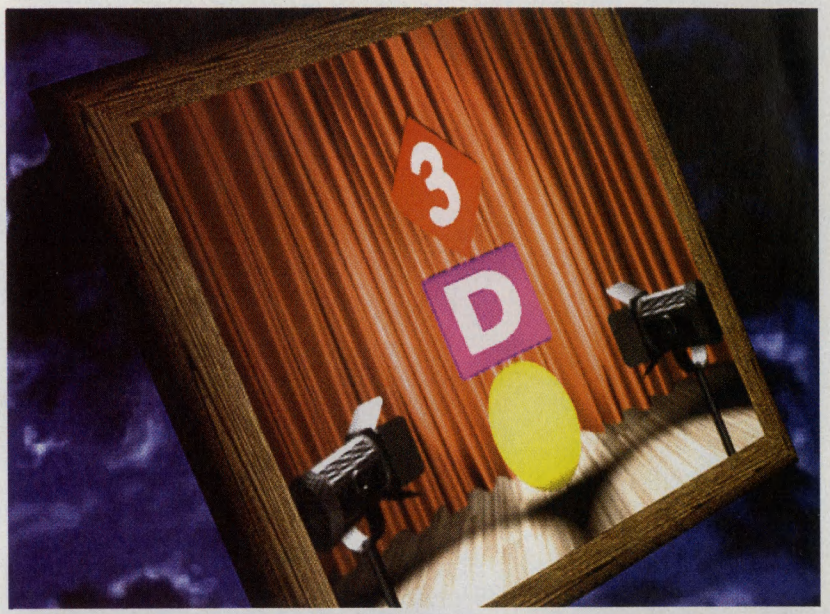
Beyond these peripherals, 3DO also sees an entirely new world being built around their system. Examples they cite are:

- Cable TV: a customized 3DO player can emulate a cable box to provide access to digital movies, interactive shopping, game shows, and on-line cable networks
- Education: network capable 3DO Interactive multiplayers can be set up in classroom learning labs, allowing students and teachers to share information in a multimedia learning environment
- Video Production: special 3DO configurations can be designed to work with multiple video signals and serve as high quality, low-cost video production studios
- Personal Computers: via 3DO expansion cards, PCs will be able to share 3DO multimedia software titles
- Portables: Yes, that's right, the interactive Walkman

The implications of 3DO for the serious game player are enormous. Sure, there have been machines like Phillips CD-I and Commodore's CD TV that promised so much. But quite apart from any intrinsic limitations, both these systems suffered greatly because of a lack of software support.

With the involvement of Electronics Arts and several major players committed to supporting 3DO, a scarcity of good software is not going to be a problem. For software developers, it's been 'open house' at 3DO whose decision to hand out development kits to anyone that needs them is very sensible. They clearly realize that even the best machine in the world is doomed without software support.

Because of the some of the software companies involved, it is unlikely that 3DO will be weighed down by usual junk games pack and boring encylopedias that appear as if by magic when a new multimedia format is born. Adventure games, flight sims and sports are the type of leisure software that will benefit most from the technology that 3DO offers.



Frame 2

Frame 3

So far, 3DO has made all the right moves. They will not be trying to market and sell the machines themselves, instead this will be left to companies with expertise in that field such as AT&T and Panasonic, or indeed to anyone who cares to acquire a license. Because of what is perceived as the mass market appeal of 3DO, an SRP as low as $600 has been touted. Many living rooms these days resemble mission control: seemingly unending wires, remotes, and, of course, the ubiquitous black boxes. How nice then, if all this techno-spew could be replaced with just *one* black box. One that could play movies, records, games, and make the coffee. With their Interactive Multiplayer, 3DO could have the solution.❑

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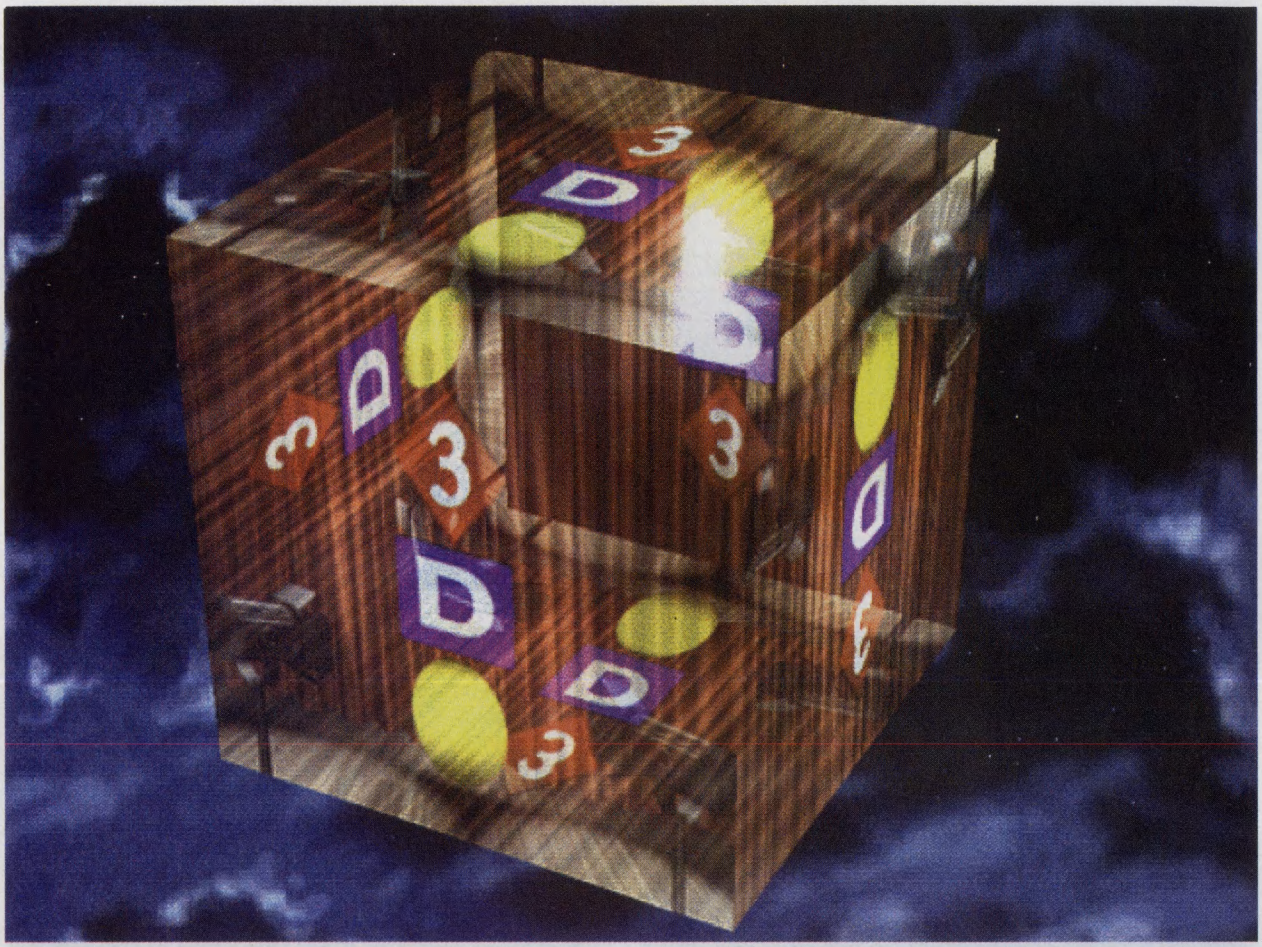
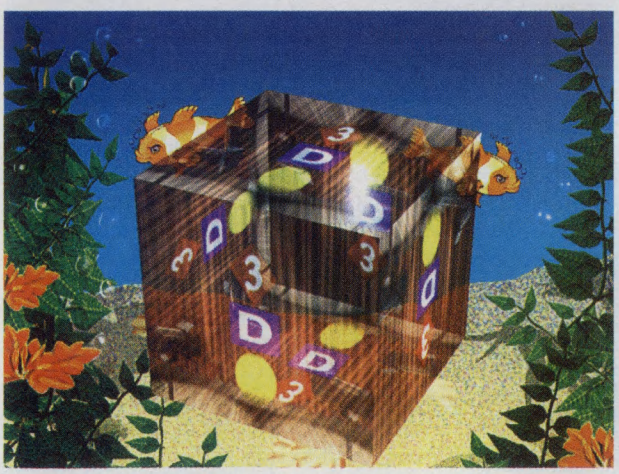
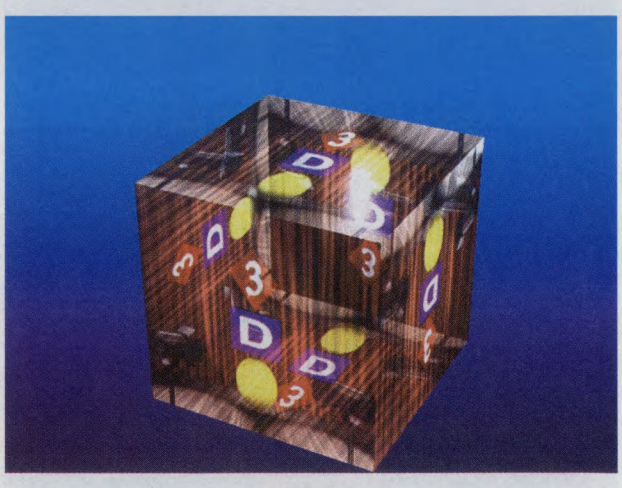


Cube 1



Cube 2



Cube 3

Notes:

Stage 1: A straightforward, full-screen bit-map which will be manipulated in the following slides.

Frame 1: This slide demonstrates the standard, full-screen image of slide 1 being scaled and mapped onto a wooden frame.

Frame 2: This slide depicts the scaled, framed and rotated image of slide 2, but over an additional opaque background.

Frame 3: This slide depicts the scaled, framed and rotated image of slide 2, but with an additional transparent effect. Notice how the nebulous gas clouds are visible behind the main image.

Cube 1: This slide demonstrated our standard two-dimensional image copied to 6 separate animation cels, all of which are then mapped to a three-dimensional cube. Notice the transparent 'glass' effect, which lets each background cel be seen through the cels in the foreground.

Cube 2 & 3: These two slides depict the same cube in slide 5, but with an additional image in the background. Notice again how the 'glass' effect allows the background image (either of galactic clouds or an aquarium setting) to be seen through the sides of the cube.

WINTER CES LAS VEGAS

Round-Up

Fields of Glory: modem option

Legacy: house party

Dominus: hybrid

WINTER CES LAS VEGAS

Like many companies who busted their butt trying to get their games out in time for the Christmas period, the Microprose cupboard was comparatively bare. But at least they've got their UK operation to turn to. Already this has produced a diamond in **World Circuit**, and now comes the very different **Fields of Glory**, a Napoleonic game based on tabletop miniatures. The player can take on the role of Napoleon, Wellington, or Blucher. The historical characteristics of these renowned figures may be selected, or a more idiosyncratic course may be pursued.

The game comes with a complete campaign, plus six individual battles. The map is isometric and covers 250 miles x 32 miles for campaign play and 1 mile for detailed battles. The interface is point-and-click, the aim being to keep the action moving. There will also be a modem option in the game, making it the first simulation dealing with this period to include such a feature.

Another UK game to appear on the Microprose label will be **Legacy: Realm of Terror**, which comes courtesy of Magnetic Scrolls, the team that produced **Wonderland**. Unlike this, **Legacy** contains no hint of the text plus graphics approach that turned some people off what I thought was a charming game.

Legacy is a 3D animated first person role playing game set in present day in America. The somewhat derivative plot recalls the *House* and *Amityville* movies: the lucky player has inherited a house, but it's haunted, though at least it's a big house: ten levels with 40 rooms per level. Are we talking house or Buckingham Palace here? Navigation is made easier by a point-and-click interface. No sign of **Pirates Gold**, the World War II tank game, or the Civil War game Sid Meier is working on, but look out for these in our summer CES report.

Hybrid games were a welcome trend at the show, normally this term usually refers to the dreaded 'arcade/adventure' genre, but in this context it meant a mixture of more cerebral elements. **Dominus** from Asciiware is a good example of this new trend. It uses their **Spellcraft** engine and attempts to combine role playing adventure with elements of wargaming. The warriors in this case include ghouls as well as *homo sapiens*, or an entirely new specie of combatant can be created when the program goes into Frankenstein simulation mode. If **Dominus** lives up to only half the sum of its parts it will be terrific.

Golf was still as popular as ever at the show. Access say they there will 'probably' be a CD ROM version of **Links** but they are reluctant to release details at present. Even ICOM Simulations, best known for their Sherlock sims, have a golf game, but it's crazy golf. And do I mean crazy. Most of the courses seem to be on mountain tops or somewhere in space.

The chief virtue of Konami's golf game appeared to be that it will run fast on a 286 machine and that it is cheap. It also comes with only one (fictional) course. Fortunately (for them) Konami do not have to rely on this to pay the bills. They've got **Champions**, for example. But then as we all know, they've had it for a while.

The latest ETA on this is 'spring.' Their other potential hit, **Frontier** (aka **Elite 2**) is scheduled for release in the second quarter of this year.

'Most bugs occur during the development of the first game engine' said Ali Atabek, CEO of Mindcraft. 'Every company has this problem.' Mindcraft have now got three tried and trusted engines up and running so Atabek is confident that 'undocumented features' will be a thing of the past, at least in Mindcraft games. '1992 was a great year for us,' he continues, '**Siege**, **Star Legions**, and **Tegel's Mercenaries** were all new engines so 1993 will see us expanding on these.' Mindcraft's next strategy game will be **Ambush** which uses the **Siege** engine. This shifts the thrust of the game from castles to open terrain while the units will be more recognisably human rather than being fantasy based. A modem option will probably be included and a scenario editor will definitely be in there.

Significant changes have been made to the sequel **Star Legions 2**, not least the addition of a modem option. Atabek, and designer Trevor Sorensen, say that the computer opponent will be 'improved' and players will be able to play the defender rather than just the attacker as in the original game. Upon completion of **Star Legions 2**, Sorensen will start work on the next chapter of **Star Fleet Battles**. Another sequel is **Tegel's Mercenaries II**. This will add a mission builder and new units. The latest in the **Magic Candle** series will be **Legends of Drakka**, the main new feature here will be cut-away scenes of digitized speech from the main characters in the game.

Mindcraft's new engine this year will be for what could be their most successful game to date. **Dominion** is a real-time fantasy strategy game with overtones of **Castles II** in that diplomacy and politics are heavily featured. But unlike the Interplay game, tactical combat will be much more prominent. The SVGA graphics are superb and overall this looks capable of giving **Warlords II** a run for its money. Readers wondering why, with so many great science fiction books languishing on the shelves, there are so many hack-neyed adventure games being released. William Gibson's *Neuromancer* was successfully transferred into software form by Interplay, while Activision did an excellent job with George Alec Effinger's *Circuits Edge*. But since then very little has emerged.

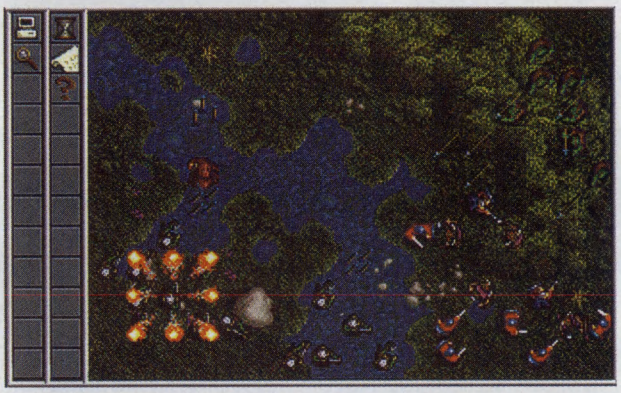
This is about to change as Cyberdreams have announced that they intend to convert famed science fiction writer Harlan Ellison's novel, *I have No Mouth and I Must Scream*, into a game. Ellison's novels have been the recipients of several awards and have been translated into 26 languages. In addition, he has won the Writers Guild of America award for his work on the TV series' *The Outer Limits*, *Twilight Zone*, and *Star Trek*.

Cyberdreams next release will be **CyberRace**, an unusual mix of a racing game and science fiction role playing. There will be multiple storylines but the player must win races to be able to afford to continue. Like Nova Logic just down the road from them, Cyberdreams have looked to voxels to enhance the graphical look of the game. The result, not surprisingly, looks like a racing version of **Comanche; Maximum Overkill**. Add-on disks featuring new planets, new tracks, and speech packs, will ensure the product is well supported.

A CD ROM version of **Cyberspace** containing additional speech will be released shortly after the floppy version. The artwork for the game has been designed by Syd Mead, who did much of the set design on Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*. The concept of **CyberRace** is bold and intriguing and if it all hangs together then look out for a great game.

Cyberdreams asked me to point out that the copy protection in **Dark Seed**, which caused much gnashing of Theo Clarke's dentures in issue 27, was only present in the early versions of the game. So get with it, Theo!

Continuing with the science fiction theme, author Larry Niven was at the show (at the invitation of Tsunami Media) to promote **Ringworld** (reviewed this issue). I asked him about the problem of converting novels to software. 'It's very difficult', he confessed. 'The hardest part is trying to convey the emotion that a book can offer.' Niven admitted to being something of an Infocommie. 'I used to love those old Infocom adventures' he told me. Like many writers, perhaps, he seems to feel that images are a poor substitute for the written word. Having said that, he was pleased with the artwork that adorned **Ringworld**.

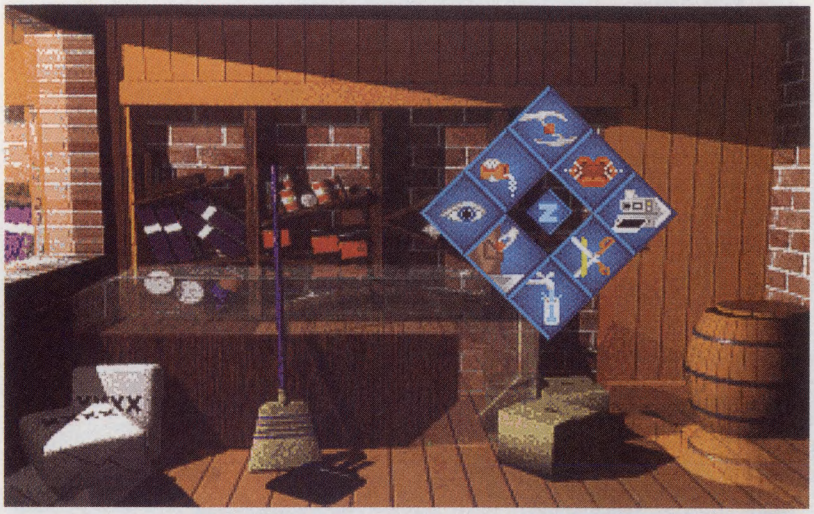


Ambush: using the Siege engine

Dominion: political overtones

CyberRace: bold concept

WINTER CES LAS VEGAS



Return to Zork: the mobile interface

Comanche: ice pick

'Some players complained that the missions were too difficult' said John Garcia, CEO of Nova Logic, when faced with hostile questions from a now weary hack. 'You can be certain that there will be some tough missions on the new mission disks,' he assured me. There will also be new terrain; deserts, the jungle, and the arctic will be particularly prominent.

QQP say they will be releasing their first role playing game this year as well as sequels to **The Lost Admiral** and **The Perfect General**. The former will feature improved graphics and a modem option while the latter will have new units. QQP have also licensed the Steve Jackson Games boardgame **The Awful Green Things from Outer Space**. 'All our strategy games will have a modem option from now on,' confirmed the company's CEO, Bruce Williams Zaccagnino.

Not much on the PC front from Accolade, though they have signed up the one of the greatest living Brazilians in the shape of Pele, the former star of many of their World Cup soccer triumphs. Let's hope the game turns out better than most of the rubbish purporting to be 'simulations' of the sport that are currently on the market.

Bethesda are to release the follow-up to **The Road to the Final Four** any day now. Perhaps 'follow-up' is something of a misnomer as the game has been completely revamped. Bethesda were less than pleased with the original. No news of **Gridiron II**, but look out for a new **Terminator**.

Domark, the UK company now with a US office, were showing off their **Harrier** flight sim which was well received in Europe. The game's US release has been delayed as the company plan to enhance the graphics, specifically by converting to SVGA and addressing the S3 Windows chip.

Three Sixty Pacific have dropped **Battlecruiser 3000 AD.** No specific reason was cited. One game that will definitely be released by Three Sixty Pacific will be **High Command,** which Three Sixty have signed up from Colorado Creations. Many of the acknowledged bugs will be fixed while a SVGA map will be added.

'It's back to Infocom for us' boomed William Volk of Activision. The cause of this retrogression being **Return to Zork**; a tacit acknowledgement that **Leather Goddesses of Phobos** was mite too easy for many. The new '**Zork**' looks very pretty and features an exceptionally refined, mobile interface.

The Koei Corporation seem to have to lost its way of late after being one the pioneers of the strategy genre with their historical simulations. **Liberty or Death** looks to be more of the same (EGA graphics) as does **Pacific Theatre of Operations** - Koei advertise its EGA graphics as though this represents some sort of technological breakthrough. The game is a World War II naval sim that features most of the major battles of that period played out at strategic level. One or two players may partake, so the game will not simply be a Japan basher.

Koei will be releasing their first non combat strategy game this year. **Aerobiz** traverses the same corridors as Impressions' **Air Bucks**. Hijackings, cut-throat ticket wars and strikes should convince players that their are easier tasks in life than running an airline.

Lucasarts were one of several companies moving heavily into the CD ROM market. **Indiana Jones and The Fate of Atlantis**, for example, will be released on that format as a complete 'talkie.' **Rebel Assault** will also be available on CD ROM (both for PC and Sega). On first sight this looks like a 'shooter' version of **X Wing**. *And* on second and third sight.

I thought the best of their new range was the same as the sequel to their 1987 release **Mania Mansions,** inspired by Chuck (*'Road Runner'*) Jones and the Warner Bros cartoons. The animations and artwork looked superb and within all the lunacy lurks what looks to be solid puzzles and much humor. Irresistible for those who believe it's never too late to have a happy childhood. The PC version will have a spoken introduction while the CD ROM version will feature speech throughout.

And so there we have it. Another winter, another CES, and another report that fills half of the magazine. Hope you've enjoyed it.

Now let's move onto the hardware . . . ❑

WINTER CES LAS VEGAS

New Release

Bridge 7.0

Bridge 7.0 is a complete bridge-playing program which allows you and your computer partner to bid against two computer opponents and then play out the hand. It is the ideal way for the beginner to learn to play bridge, and for the more advanced player to get in a few hands without having to round up three other persons. Many new features have been added to further refine this classic computer program:

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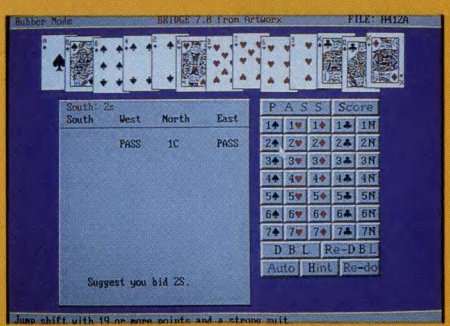
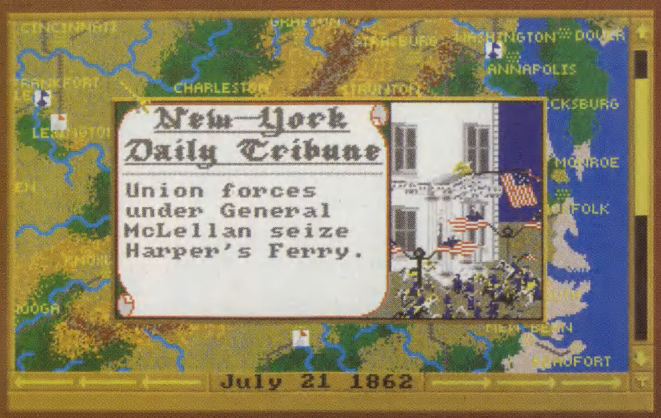


Bidding is a snap with point and Click mouse interface or keyboard input.

Life-like high resolution digitized card graphics add to the realism of the program.



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- Scenario editor allows players to construct their own battles or play those already included.

Reader Service No. 83

Patriot

Into the gulf once more, dear friends

By Sandy Eisen

Few other computer wargames will have been so eagerly looked forward to than **Patriot**. Three-Sixty Pacific, the publishers of **Harpoon**, announced this project to present a serious and historically accurate simulation of the ground war in the Gulf not long after the real Gulf War finished.

As a longtime player and admirer of **Harpoon**, and having been recently impressed with the graphic excellence and playability of the **V for Victory** series, also from Three-Sixty, I was probably near the front of the queue of those who expected to spend many hours in the virtual sands of Southern Iraq.

Before going anywhere, a VESA video driver must be installed before the game will run. The ensuing 256 colour SVGA (640 x 480 pixels) graphics are very impressive.

Once a scenario has been loaded the main game screen offers a choice of presenting either organisational information on friendly units, or map displays which feature both enemy and friendly units.

The scenarios

Patriot includes 14 scenarios. There is also a complete database for both sides, together with a scenario editor which can be used to create additional player scenarios. I have only tried a few of the smaller scenarios. I found the larger ones completely unmanageable. In my opinion even the smallest ('Introductory') scenario, which features a US cavalry regiment taking on an Iraqi mechanised division is far too large for a beginner to comfortably handle. What are missing are some really small scenarios, starting with as little as a single battalion on each side, which might provide a gentler introduction into the system's complexities.

The **Patriot** scenarios are described only in terms of the orders to each side. I suppose that this is intended to add to the feeling of 'realism,' but I would have preferred a general description in plain English. This approach was used in **Harpoon** and makes scenario selection easier.

There is a nicely executed series of links between the data presentation on all aspects of friendly units. However I could find no method of gaining any information whatsoever about enemy units except spotting that they exist on the map. This remains the case both at the start of the scenario and throughout the game.

The game is initially paused in the start position, and the manual emphasises that much of the Commanders role is to review and adjust the proposed battle plan before anything happens. Of course orders can also be changed during any subsequent pause in the action. When running the game can either be set to pause automatically after each 15 minute turn, or to run continuously.

The units

Each unit is assigned a posture which will affect how well it moves and fights. The available postures include Travel, Mounted, Dismounted, Probe, Defend, Delay and Withdraw. In addition to posture units are assigned to a formation. Here the choice is between Line, Covering, Reserve and Support. Finally each unit is assigned a priority (out of all units under the same command) and this affects order of attack, and priority of re-supply, air support and artillery.

In considering all the above concepts, I am content with the idea of posture, and feel that this is an appropriate choice for unit commanders to make. However I am less happy about formation and priority, and consider that on balance these over-complicate the process of commanding a unit. I am not arguing that these distinctions are unimportant, and if the game engine is sophisticated enough to handle them, then so be it.

I feel that the selection of a formation is mostly dependent on unit type and position and should be handled by the commander's staff, not the player himself who has enough to do just deciding which units are going where and in what posture. Most of the time, as far as I understand it, units will be in Line, with cavalry in covering, and helicopters and artillery in

Designed by
Frank Chadwick

Programmed by
Artech Digital Entertainments

Published by
Three Sixty Pacific

Systems
PC

Graphics
SVGA (VESA driver required)

Support. Reserve is clearly for units behind the main front. If it is too much to expect the AI to handle these choices for the player, then perhaps the game engine itself might have been usefully simplified. I feel that a similar argument can be applied to the concept of priority.

The map

When I first saw the **Patriot** map displays I was very impressed.The designers have worked very hard to produce displays which are both functional and beautiful. There are almost too many features to list, including multiple map modes, mouse-controlled zooming windows, choices of how units are to be displayed, and what terrain features are on-screen.

Despite this, I feel that the maps are not quite clever enough to clearly display the massive amount of spatial information in the game. I found it hard to follow exactly where my units were. This arises partly because no scale is available on any map, partly because of the problems deriving from multiple overlapping units, and finally because there is no change of size to the unit icons when zooming the map.

If it is hard to know exactly where units are, I found it even harder to tell them where to go. There are 3 methods of doing this, involving the use of a pair of objective arrows, a set of multiple arrows or adjusting the boundaries between units. I did not find any of them to be completely clear or satisfactory in use.

While it is fairly easy to make minor changes in the axis of movement, turns of 90 degrees or more are extraordinarily difficult. The training manual addendum which walks players through the first and simplest scenario accepts that such manoeuvres are difficult, but goes on to advise that a unit which has overrun its way through the enemy line can be ordered to turn around and hit the enemy again. I tried to do this many times, but I do not think I was ever successful.

The design

The basic design concepts and philosophy behind **Patriot** are sound. In the introduction to the manual we are told that the abstractions from boardgames do not need to be carried over into computer games (there is no need to break up terrain into an artificial grid, etc), and that users should think like a Commander and not a game player.

This is all as it should be, and is hardly surprising since the 'Design Concept' is credited to respected veteran designer Frank Chadwick. However somewhere between the concept and the execution the project has gone astray and the final result is a monster program which might have been designed for a Pentagon think tank to run on a mainframe.

Although a tremendous achievement, claims that **Patriot** is 'the definitive land warfare simulation for the IBM PC' actually betray the main cause of the game's problems: it tries to do too much. This failure is revealed by a menu option on the very first screen of the game where, as well as several other highly appropriate choices about weather and airpower, players are asked to select a command level which may be Army, Corps, Division or Brigade/Regiment. In my book each of these command levels is a different game requiring a different design emphasis.

What **Patriot** attempts to do is to provide a game engine which simulates the war at battalion/company level using 15 minute turns and keeping track of every individual vehicle and squad. The game engine then provides the input to each of the command levels of the game. Superficially it appears that players have the bonus of four games (command levels) for the price of one. In practice I found that none were satisfactory to my personal taste, and all suffered from the difficulty of translation from the super-detailed 'simulation-engine' on which they were based.

The verdict

Overall I feel that I must admit that, so far at least, I am disappointed with **Patriot**. The game fails to excite me firstly because it does not present a genuine Command Perspective, and secondly because I did not particularly enjoy playing it. This is despite being very interested in the subject and wanting to like and play the game. I think that these failings have arisen from the designers' attempts to provide a totally complete and detailed simulation of the entire war.

Nevertheless, I suspect that there is a good game hidden inside and that with the right scenarios, correctly presented, together with some adjustments to the system, and also a better programmed learning system to teach players what to do, **Patriot** could be fun to play. I do know that Three-Sixty are already working on an improved version, and hopefully this should include some smaller scenarios.❑

In the light of the complexity of this game, readers may note that we have published our own tutorial elsewhere in this issue

"We choose to go to the moon..."
–John F. Kennedy

"Likely to set a standard for multimedia entertainment products."
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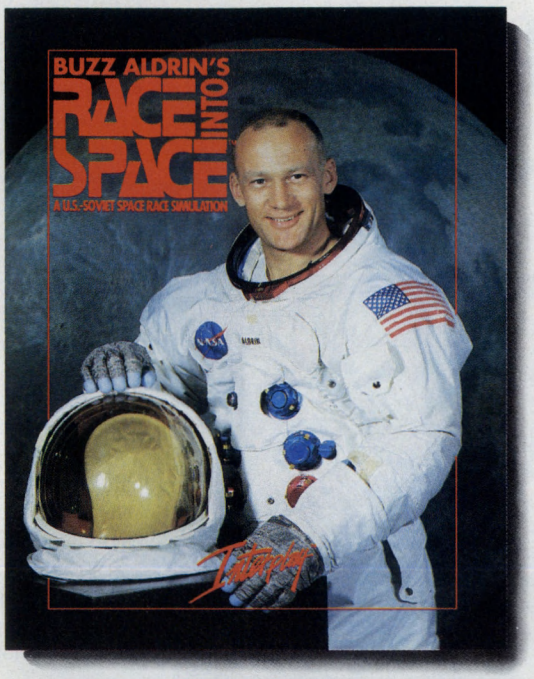

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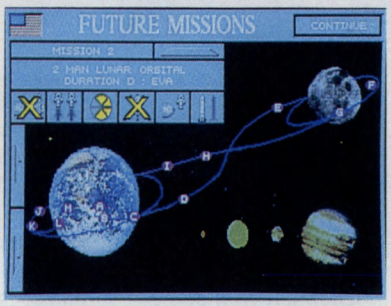

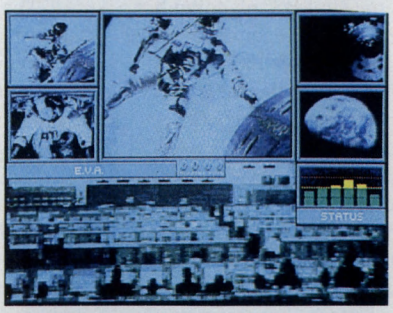

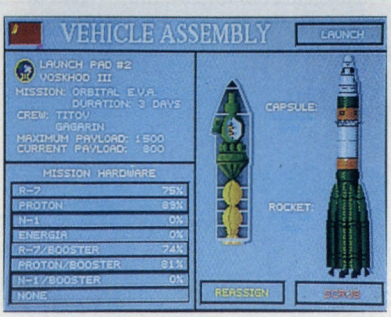

MS-DOS Screens Pictured.

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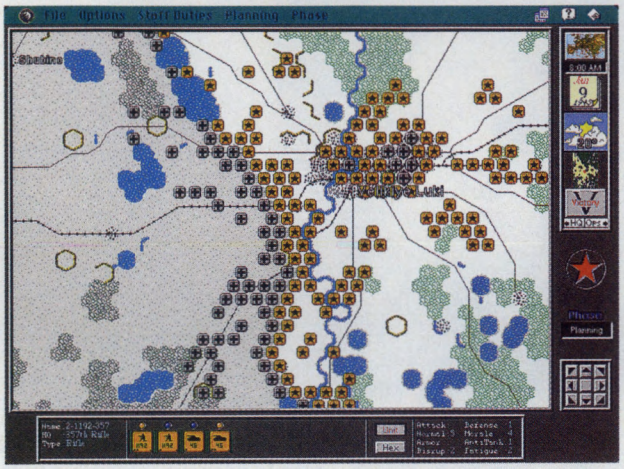
Reader Service No. 43

A Cold Wind Blows

Marc Dultz on Strategy and tactics in V for Victory: Velikiye Luki



Part 1: the Germans

The following discussion focuses upon the German player's options within the framework of the campaign game in Three-Sixty's **V for Victory: Velikiye Luki.** The Soviet strategy will be covered in a subsequent article. I have chosen to eschew a review of the individual scenarios since much of the strategic planning has been pre-programmed, while tactical options can be addressed and applied via this vehicle. Keep in mind that the structure of the individual scenarios do not necessitate the same structure in the campaign game. The campaign plays far differently, and players should be cognizant of that.

Additionally, I have assumed that certain criteria are in effect since they play into the game's strength of being a wargame simulator instead of a typical wargame. I define a wargame simulator as a wargame whose inherent aim is to place the player in the role of a commanding officer who is as unsure of the unfolding events as his historical counterpart, thus imparting a certain degree of decision making based upon what one doesn't know as well as what is readily apparent.

The criteria in effect are as follows:

- Limited Intelligence
- One Division per Attack
- Fog of War
- Realistic Probability for Weather
- Limited Allied Air Superiority
- No Axis variants utilized

Initially, the German commander is placed in a very precarious position. The bulk of the LIX (59th) Korps under the jurisdiction of Gruppe Chevalerie in the southern operational sector of Armeegruppe Nord (North) are battleworthy but spread out. Dug in and strung out along a north-south axis, said forces are forward-deployed just to the east of the fortress-city of Velikiye Luki. To make matters worse, neither dangling flank is anchored upon indomitable terrain, nor are they secured by forces from other operational armies. Additionally, reserves are transparent, the few available holed-up garrisoning the citadel to the rear.

Lay of the Land

Opposite these beleaguered guardians are the Red Army's reinforced 3rd Shock Army, comprising one mechanized and two infantry corps and complete with numerous independent regiments of artillery, engineer and armor. Their primary task is to drive west of Velikiye Luki and cut off the Vitebsk-Leningrad rail line, thus cutting off supplies to the balance of Armeegruppe Nord operating in the Leningrad salient. Secondary to this, Soviet forces have as their aim the encirclement and subsequent entrapment of the Velikiye Luki garrison, much like the ensuing debacle taking place in southern Russia at Stalingrad, only on a lesser scale.

To sum up, the German task is herculean at best. Time to don the loincloth.

Go West Young Man!

To attempt to stand and fight with the cream of the 3rd Shock Army is senseless indeed. Even dug in, elements of the 83rd Infantry Division to the north and 3rd Gebirgsjager (Mountain Infantry) Division to the south can be easily overwhelmed by superior Soviet formations. Unfortunately, this is the very same battleplan the computer adopts when playing the Wehrmacht. The AI gives new meaning to the phrase 'stand and deliver.'

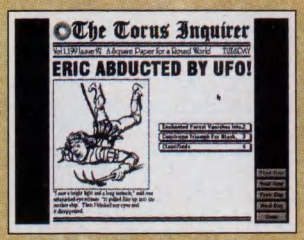
The aforementioned undersupplied troops are best used 'advancing to the rear' towards more defensible terrain.The 83rd should fall back on the fortress-city proper, filling in some of the remaining holes in the city's defenses. Once assigned to their new lodgings, all efforts should be made to dig in and/or fortify all available perimeter hexes.

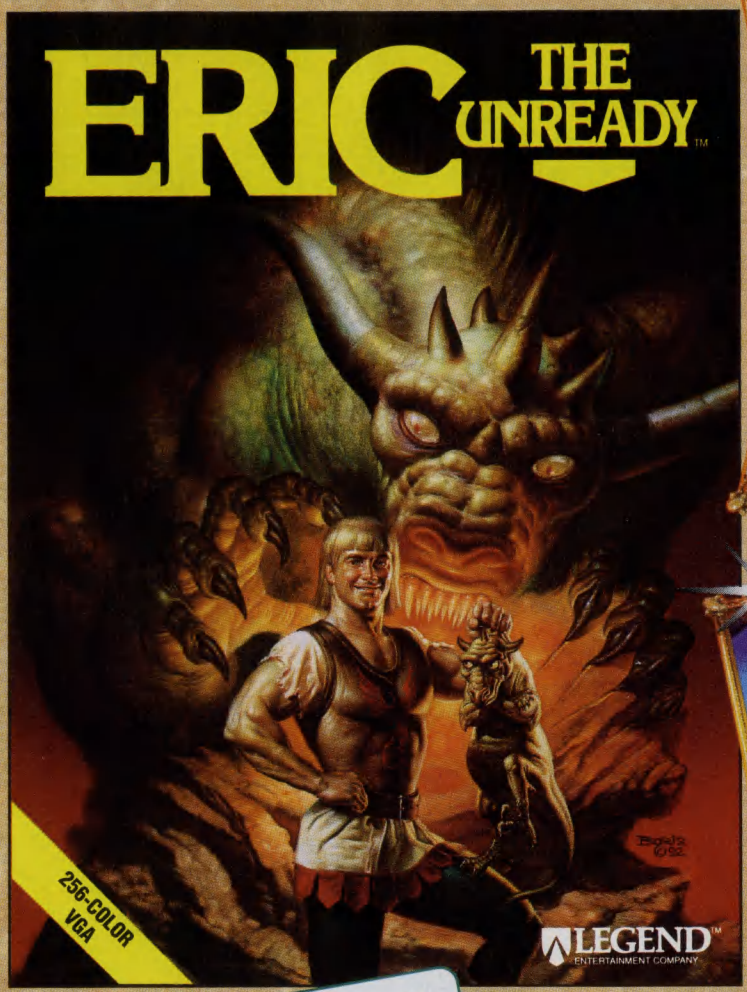
Artillery and rocket formations should fall back to interior positions within the city and likewise put shovel to dirt and hunker down. Meanwhile, the 'mountain men' of the 3rd Gebirgsjager should take up positions along the western bank of the northern portion of the River Lopat. Artillerists and headquarters units to the rear, front-line units should be spread out on alternating hexes allowing for interlocking zones of control. As before, once the troops are in position, they should be bedded down in dug-in foxholes with earthen pillows. Nighty-night till the fireworks start.

Hammer Time!

Before all of the artillery formations are withdrawn, they should spend at least two turns throwing up a curtain of gunpowder and dirt along the four axis of advance the main

"Catch a dragon? No sweat!"





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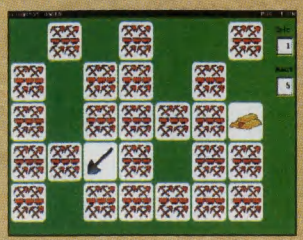

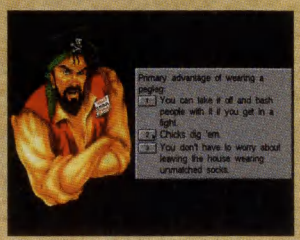
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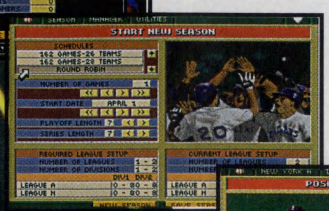

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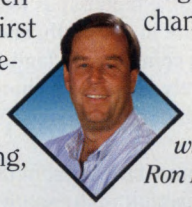

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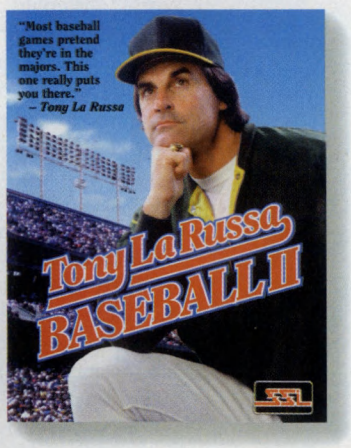

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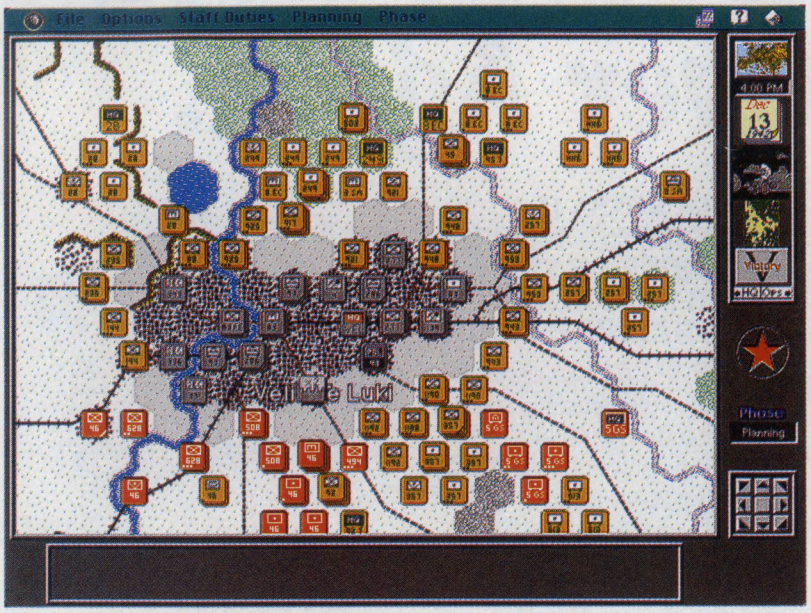

Soviet thrusts will follow. The Red Army will undoubtedly advance along the two rail lines and two 'highways' that lay to the east of Velikiye Luki.

These conduits should be unmercifully bombarded with interdiction missions to delay the Red Army as long as possible in order that the 'advance to the rear' be conducted as swiftly and as expeditiously as possible. Care should be taken not to overly exert the artillery arm. Once the fatigue level rises to 6, shut 'em down and pack 'em up. It's time for them to retire to Hotel Luki.

Initially, air strikes should follow suit interdicting the 3rd Shock Army's advance during the daylight hours. Be sure to avoid troop concentrations that have flak batteries nearby since they will reduce the airborne artillery's effectiveness. Worse, one could end up bombing one's own bunker buddies! One of the most important tenets of good military doctrine is to maintain interior as opposed to exterior lines especially when one is forced onto the defensive. Interior lines can be thought of as being on the inside of an egg shell while exterior would be on the outside. To take this further, imagine a Point A on the top of the egg and a Point B on the bottom. One can reach the opposite point much quicker on the inside of the eggshell than can be done on the outside. So too when battlelines are drawn. Troops can be shuttled back and forth on interior lines much more readily than on exterior lines thus increasing one's response time in the event of flash fires.

With this in mind, the German position can adopt interior lines by falling back to the northern section of the River Lopat in the south (southern wing) and along the hilltops to the east of the Nasva-Velikiye Luki highway in the north (northern wing). These two wings are then joined at the body at Velikiye Luki.

As reinforcements arrive, these wings will be extended outwards to meet the Red Army thrusts north and south of the city. If need be, troops can be shuttled back and forth utilizing the road and rail net that passes through Velikiye Luki although once units are pulled from the line, other units will be faced with an exacting task of thwarting Red Army probes.

Equally important, all of the key geographic objectives important to both sides still fall inside the 'Luki' bird. Points will be garnished every turn these objectives are kept out of the hands of the Red Army. As long as the 'Luki' doesn't become extinct, victory becomes all the more certain.

Further feathers of the peacock

If one could visualize the defense of Velikiye Luki in the shape of a bird then one can fathom the method by which the wings are fleshed out. The initial forces of LIX Korps, located at Novosokolniki, plus the reinforcements arriving on 15 and 16 November should take up positions on the northern shoulder of the 'bird.' Likewise, the 3rd Gebirgsjager Division, fleeing from the east, take up positions on the southern shoulder.

The head of the bird is defended by the 83rd Infantry with the Velikiye Luki garrison forming up on the tail. The 20th Motorized Division, also arriving on 15 and 16 November, take up positions on the wing just south of the Gebirgsjagers. The men of the 291st Infantry take up the southernmost position along the southern wing. The northern wing receives it's recruits between 17 and 19 November when the veteran 8th Panzer Division rolls in from the northwestern portion of the map. This is how we serve this bird cold.

Now for the gravy. Further reinforcements whisk in from the southwest on 24 November. Elements of the elite 1st SS Motorized, wheels northeast and takes up positions along the road to the rear of the Gebirgsjagerand 20th Motorized. This unit represents the Wehrmacht's reserve, and more importantly the counter punch to the Red Army's southern pincer movement.

The 6th Luftwaffe Field Division arrives on the south-central portion of the map behind Red Army lines. While only operating as a garrison, they do serve a useful purpose, threatening the rear areas of the Red Army's southern drive. If nothing else, valuable formations will be tied down to secure this new found flank.

The Red Army will march along three axis of advance; one through the hinterlands to the north, one through the rugged terrain in the south, and the third upon Velikye Luki proper. The computer AI tends to handle the Red Army conservatively, advancing cautiously and preferring to mass formations before attacking. Time, it figures, is on it's side. Tick, tock.

The computer opponent usually mounts it's first substantial assault in the south with the first blows falling upon either the Gebirgsjageror 20th Motorized. Make sure both divisions are well dug in. The Red Army doesn't need to be given a free-hand in it's intelligence gathering. Once the Red Army looks to be concentrating in staging areas, hammer them with concentrated artillery.

Remember too that the armor can't cross an unfrozen river except at bridge crossings. Allowing only the infantry to cross, can play into the Wehrmacht's hand.

Supply considerations are crucial throughout the game but even more pronounced in the opening stages of the battle. The southern wing should be kept to minimal supply until the Red Army onslaught is about to take place.

Stockpile the additional supplies in order that the 1st SS can at least be in general supply when the time is right for it to throw back the Red Army bridgehead. Properly managed, 1st SS can hurl back the Red Army as far back as the southeastern approaches to Velikye Luki. HALT! Attempting

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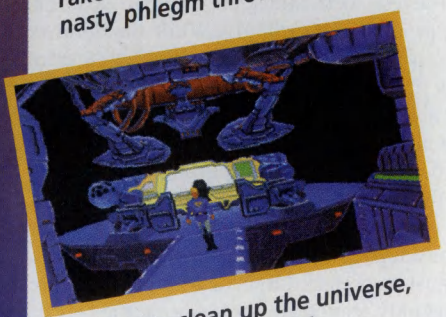

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to sweep the southern pincer off the map will only leave your flank open and 1st SS dangerously weak. Instead, dig in and concentrate on the northern drive.

Merry Christmas

Once the northern thrust of the Red Army clears the hinterlands north of Velikye Luki, the 8th Panzer will find themselves hard pressed to defend it's assigned zone on the northern wing. absorbing an inordinate amount of punishment via the Red Army's northern pincer.

Unfortunately, not enough units are available to form interlocking zones of control along it's entire sector of responsibility. Instead, 8th Panzer should fall back and defend in bastions, preferably in the northern town hexes along the northern wing.

Properly dug in, these units could endure much of the ensuing sallies by the Red Army's northern pincer drive. Too, it allows for elements of this northern drive to threaten Novoskolniki, a key objective for both combatants. This porous defense makes the Red Army's northern pincer drive difficult to supply and subsequently reinforce which, in turn, makes the Axis Christmas day counter offensive all the more likely to succeed.

Be sure to swing back the northern wing just far enough to guard the central rail line leading from the western map edge. Leave this task to the LIX Korps, defending the line on every other hex with dug in bunkers.

Correctly choreographed, the Wehrmacht can sweep aside the westernmost drive of the northern pincer, turning it back upon the hinterlands north of Velikye Luki. Essentially, Red Army forces in the north are punched out, and turn into easy cannon fodder when the balance of the 331st Infanterie and elements of Group Woehler arrive with Santa Claus in mid-December. Before the Red Army descends upon the town of Novoskolniki though, a garrison should be placed on every hex to avoid unnecessary victory point loss due to the town's relative importance to the Red Army. Make good use of the Brandenburger detachments recently made available to the German cause. Their primary purpose should be to make contact with and consequently destroy Red Army headquarters in the rearward areas.

Without the HQ's the northern punch will be punch drunk and collapse like a house of cards.

Once the Red Army pincers are pinned backed, the rest of the battle becomes meaningless. The Red Army rarely attempts to penetrate Velikye Luki proper, the fortress city is just too much for them to overcome. Time, space and logistics are on the Wehrmacht's side, the 3rd Shock Army now only a shadow of it's former self. Remember, Ivan Ivanovitch, miles to go before you sleep...

Of Earthworks and Cannonade

The two most important tactics the German commander must utilize to the utmost are digging in and tossing arty. If a unit has nothing to do, give it a shovel. Not only do they defend at higher ratios but artillery becomes more effective when hunkered down. Earthen battleworks are difficult obstacles to clear, protect their occupants from all kinds of nasties, and make for big, morale boosters.

Artillery should be used when necessary, not haphazardly cratering the battlefield on counter battery missions. Red army units with heavy duty fatigue levels should be bombed continuously until the frontline troops can easily overwhelm the position. Conversely, artillery should be rested when their own fatigue level rises to 6. Lowered morale results on resulting artillery missions, which in turn reduces the artillery's effectiveness. Firing till the gun tubes are molten red is a temporary stopgap, at best. Practice the use of alternating artillery missions whereby every other artillery battalion is used while it's sister battalion rests.

Conversely, the Red Army rarely hunkers down to Mother Russia. Call it a 'winter bug' but the Red Army refuses to defend in anything but the surrounding terrain. Make the most of this when launching counterattacks. Furthermore, falling back on Velikye Luki instead of standing firm against the initial onslaught alleviates the Wehrmacht's problem with the 3rd Shock Army's artillery.

Escaping their rain of death forces the Red Army's artillery arm to move forward with the attack wave instead of supporting it. This redeployment can take several valuable turns before they are in position and readied for fire. Time bought is time well spent.

On the attack, regimental integrity is a must. Attack with units of the same parent formation (mandatory under the one division per attack rule) to gain odds shifts due to units operating within the same division. As well, never attack when the fatigue level rises above 6. Chances are your units will fail and be left prime candidates for counterattack due to a further increase in their fatigue level.

Supply and artillery management, while tedious and time consuming, should always be left up to the player and never handed over to the staff assistant. The staff assistant plays conservatively and will tend to use the artillery on counter battery artillery missions. The artillery can be better employed blunting Red Army parries or tiring out fleeing attackers. Attachment and reattachment of formations should be adopted as a matter of course. The Wehrmacht needs to be flexible in it's defense and units need to be shuttled back in forth to form kampfgruppen, or 'battlegroups.' If a fire needs to be put out, be prepared to reconfigure divisions and reassign supply to them.

A Trail of Two Cities

Every army travels on it's stomach and the Wehrmacht's is no different. The logistical trail of Group Chevalerie leads from the northwest, west, and southwest portions of the map, and must be protected accordingly. While the northwestern supply line can be cut and the western line can temporarily fall into new tenant's hands, the southwestern line must be protected at all costs. All the more reason the southern Red Army thrust must be blunted and rolled up and the northern thrust must be allowed to burn itself out.

I hope the reader has gleaned some insight to the task the Wehrmacht commander must assume to defend against the Red Army onslaught. Make no mistake, the German battleplan must be prepared to deal with multiple threats while owning only scant resources. A supreme task but not one impossible to accomplish.

Next issue, we'll look at the battle from the Red Army's perspective.❑

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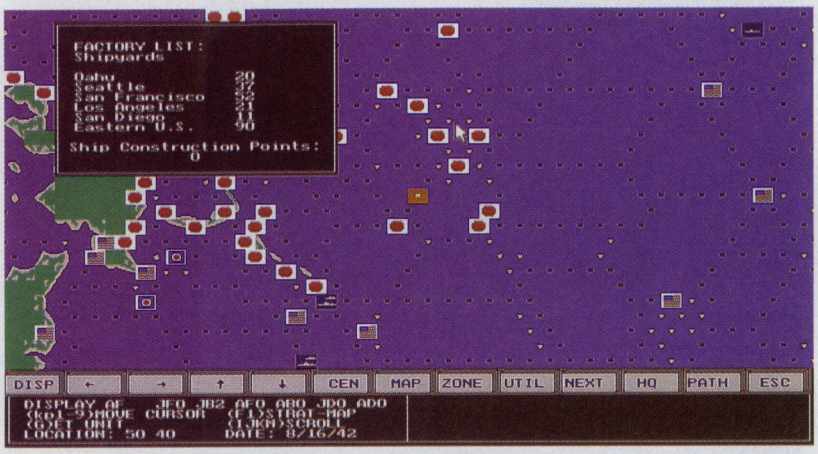
War in the Pacific 1942-1992

Steve Wartofsky on the nerds-eye view



Pacific War: overhead map strategy

A strategy game is something that provides the player a chance to engage in a complex play of force and counter-force, tension, pressure and renewal. Resources are marshalled to engage an opponent in a contest for space and time; winning involves establishing a modicum of security in the belief that annihilation has been satisfactorily postponed. The best strategy games represent a process wherein seeming successes are always open to a surprise assault, where sheer quantities of force on the one side can be countered by sheer ingenuity on the other.

War as a game

Wargames are a particular variant of strategy game. They engage historical ideas about unit tactics and capabilities, about the management of resources, and about the limits placed upon the deployment of forces, even when they are at their most abstract. The space within which a wargame evolves is both geographical and territorial; terrain variations interact profoundly with representations of political boundaries, thus providing the player with two potential opponents: one constructed much like him or herself, the other made up of the limits of nature.

Historical wargames are more specific yet: some effort must be made to adequately represent actual events, technology, terrains, forces, resources and contests between historical participants in a believable way, one subject to the test of other more textual representations of the same history. And thus we get to historical wargames on computer - more specifically, the fiftieth anniversary commemoration of the War in the Pacific between Japan and the United States that has implicitly taken place in the past year, in a spate of software releases attempting to cover this vast historical subject.

It's not only the commemorative timing that's led to such a widespread attempt to engage this particular period and location of military conflict; given the definitions outlined above, the Pacific War is conceptually one of the most historically interesting strategic challenges available to wargame designers. The terrain across which the conflict takes place is vast, yet varied (air, sea, land, island-based, land-based, ship-based, carrier-based); the forces in conflict are even more so. *Integrating* such a diversity of factors into a coherent and playable game requires the ambitiousness of game designers looking for the ultimate challenge.

The overhead view

What kinds of successes in game design have resulted? A few years before the recent wave, **Battlehawks 1942**, **Silent Service II** and the original **Carriers at War** defined three points of view on the Pacific War which have essentially been maintained by the most recent games. **Carriers at War**, **Carrier Strike**, **Aces of the Pacific**, **Pacific War** and **Task Force 1942** carry forward the committment to the genres of Overhead Map Strategy game, First-Person Air Combat simulation, and First-Person Ship-to-Ship Combat simulation defined by the previous generation of PacWar games. Let's deal with them in that order.

The Overhead Map Strategy Game has proven the most epic in approach. **Carrier Strike**, for instance, limits itself primarily to focus upon the capabilities of aircraft carriers in the Pacific War, but even with that limitation, the game is gigantic in proportions. Problems of intelligence, search capabilities, task force movement and management, weather systems, supply and reinforcement, unit capabilities and combat resolution are all explored in-depth, over a host of scenarios. The game provides a wonderful overview of the details of carrier operations, and makes clear how much

management of air missions, whether search or attack, was crucial to the pursuit of strategy on both sides.

Pacific War, the most recent release by the same designer (Gary Grigsby), dwarfs **Carrier Strike** by comparison, and incorporates considerations of aircraft carrier warfare into a representation of the entire land, sea and air Pacific War from start to finish. **Pacific War** adds to **Carrier Strike** further modeling of intelligence considerations, to the point of providing somewhat randomized representation of the effectiveness of Allied codebreaking as the game proceeds. **Pacific War** also succeeds like nothing else that has been released in giving the player a chance to engage in the combined management of land-based, air-based and ship-based attacks, with goals and victory conditions extended beyond the taking or defense of particular positions in a scenario to expanding and utilizing either Japanese or Allied resources for production and reinforcement purposes. As with Grigsby's exploration of World War II in Europe, **Pacific War** highlights the extent to which war in the mid-twentieth century became total war, an engagement of virtually the entire productive and destructive resources of the warring nations.

Carriers at War, SSG's revamping of their earlier classic, focuses like **Carrier Strike** on aircraft carrier operations, but provides a much more comprehensive representation of both sea- and land-based air operations than **'CS.'** The game is also much less abstract, in that units and battles are given some artistic graphic representation of their status, and dynamic monitoring of air and air-to-ground combat takes place throughout the game.

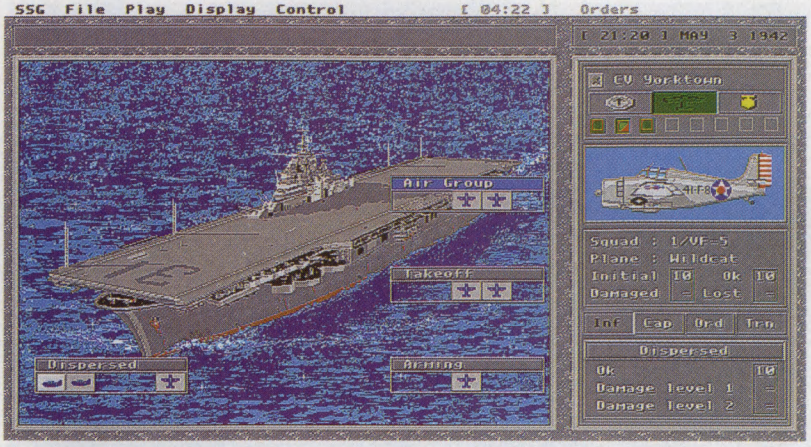
Combat in real-time

Unlike the explicitly turn-based SSI games mentioned above, **Carriers at War** gives the player a chance to engage in operations under real-time pressure, thus simulating some of the tension of having to make command decisions in the midst of an assault. The artificial intelligence routines tend to provide varied and challenging play, and react more dynamically to player choices than is usually the case in most wargames. The specific strength of **Carriers at War**, then, derives from its effective simulation of the atmosphere within which daily command in the Pacific War theatre took place. None of the other games mentioned here does as good a job of providing an intimate look at this command perspective.

The numbers game

But how do these games function as history? Not very well, unfortunately. As thorough as they are in the documentation of equipment and unit strengths, and in the creation of sophisticated equations representing all the factors and modifiers potentially involved in conflict between any few units, and in the accumulation of those local models into the more comprehensive overall modeling of a particular historical scenario, these games ultimately represent a nerd's-eye-view of events. Which is to say, the main focus is on numbers, on who's got the best technology, the most resources, the most capable hardware - the quantitative advantage.

There's nothing wrong with this, and the narratives incorporated in the manuals for the above-mentioned games



Carriers at War: comprehensive representation

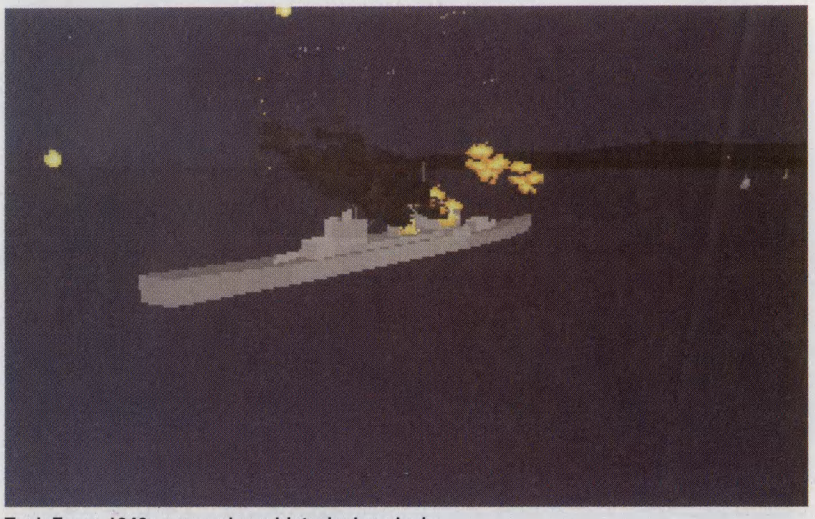
make clear that such a perspective on history can be developed beyond the parameters of the spreadsheet. Martin Campion's article from *Strategy & Tactics #51,* included in the manual for **Carrier Strike**, does a wonderful job of describing the historical evolution of the carrier hardware on both sides, for instance. Albert Nofi's global assessment of the Pacific War in the *S&T #29* article reprinted in the **Pacific War** manual does a similarly comprehensive job of making clear that Japanese economic and productive resources were never any match for those generated in the US in this period, and makes a good case based on that these are the factors that ultimately count in a war.

Human perspective

War is a history of (in)human engagements as well, however, and this is not taken adequately into account in the nerd's-eye-view of things. The manual for **Carriers at War** seems a lot more human in its historical commentary, not only because it focuses more intently on the strategic command challenges facing each side at the various important nodal points of the conflict, but because, behind all the analysis of strategy, the reader can hear the persistent voice of an Aussie aware of the tenuousness of his and his country's historical fate, all of which hung in the balance throughout the Pacific War. That human perspective blends well into the commentary included with **Carriers at War**, even if it doesn't quite make it into the game itself.

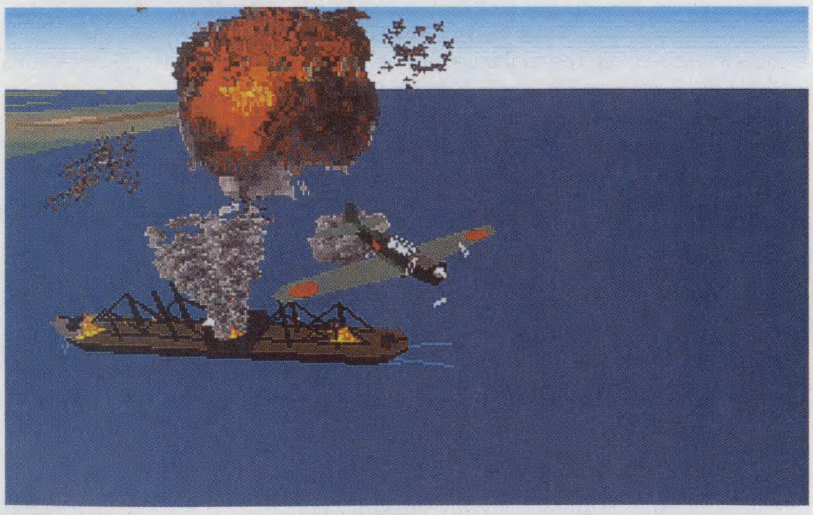
Ace of aces

The best historical analysis accompanying any of the wargames presented here comes in the manual for **Aces of the Pacific**. Here, the economic, territorial and historical imperatives driving Japanese militarism are taken into account. The heroism, futility, tragedy, stupidity and inevitability present in the Pacific War are all taken into account. The narrative is constructed in such a way as to suggest the historical irony that US economic sanctions against Japan, as well as the influence of the global European economy then undergoing depression, were as much respon-



Task Force 1942: succeeds as historical analysis

Aces of the Pacific



Aces of the Pacific: more tactics than strategy

sible for the attack on Pearl Harbor as Yamamoto's ingenuity. The realities of Yamamoto's learning of the potential of air power against fleets from listening to Billy Mitchell at a time when his own countrymen were writing off his analyses as preposterous, are presented vividly and precisely. Real historical thinking drives the commentary in **Aces of the Pacific**'s manual, and proves truly complementary to an air combat simulation whose focus is on the skills, successes and losses of pilots from both sides, playing out the realities of the war on a daily basis, war with as much of a human face as is possible. It's no accident that **Aces of the Pacific** is replete with pictures of the various pilots from the period; an attempt has clearly been made here to remind players that war is not simply a question of setting the machinery loose, but rather a question of putting weapons of mass destruction in the hands of human beings and setting them loose on each other.

This kind of perspective is also consistent with the first-person perspective this genre of wargaming represents. Wargaming at this level involves more tactics than strategy, and provides an interesting counterpoint to the overhead perspective. Whereas, in the overhead perspective, the player has almost unlimited freedom in making choices and deciding the extent to which his or her will should be imposed upon units at various levels, in the first-person perspective, the player's will can only operate at the tactical level.

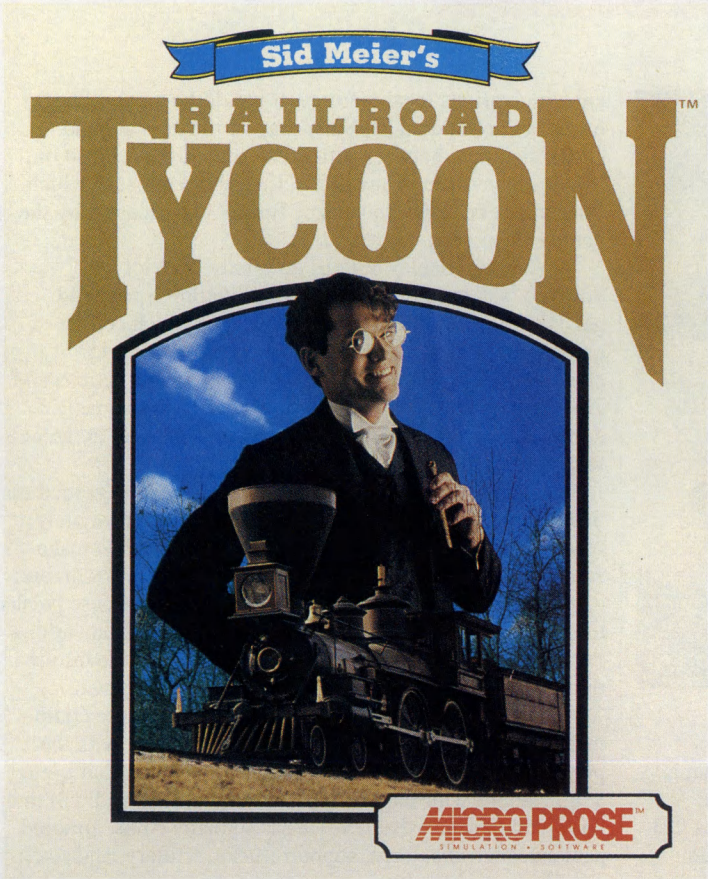
There's a kind of fatality built into the software's hard-wired historical representation, that makes it clear that the larger picture is rather difficult to influence from the front lines of war. Here, the computer and the game designer command the player, and heroism or tragedy, success and defeat, prove local and temporary at best.

History in the making

And thus we end with **Task Force 1942**, a game that stands somewhere between the historical perspectives represented in the Overhead Map wargame and the First-Person simulation. Though more like **Aces of the Pacific** than **Pacific War** in scope, **Task Force 1942** does an interesting job of balancing the strengths present in both games. The resource management and unit deployment aspects of **Pacific War** get played out effectively in the Campaign mode of **TF1942**, whereas the individual tactical combat aspects of **Aces of the Pacific** are met with a fascinating representation of first-person command perspective of ship-to-ship battle.

What distinguishes **Task Force 1942** from any of the above-mentioned games is that it provides the player a chance to move easily from one perspective to another. The limits and advantages of each point of view can be weighed off against each other dynamically, and the particular strategic challenges that make for greatness in **Carriers at War** can be taken on as well. While **Task Force 1942** provides a lot less in the way of historical overview in the manual, it comes to grips with perhaps the most interesting perspective on history: an accounting of surface naval battles at a time when such battles were quickly proving both tactically and strategically anachronistic.

There are few times in history when contemporary historical phenomena are suddenly revealed as anachronisms; but that awareness of lived reality rapidly turning into the past is truly the stuff of which history is made. In this sense, **Task Force 1942** succeeds as historical analysis like nothing else in computer (or board) wargaming. Let's hope there's more forthcoming along these lines.❑



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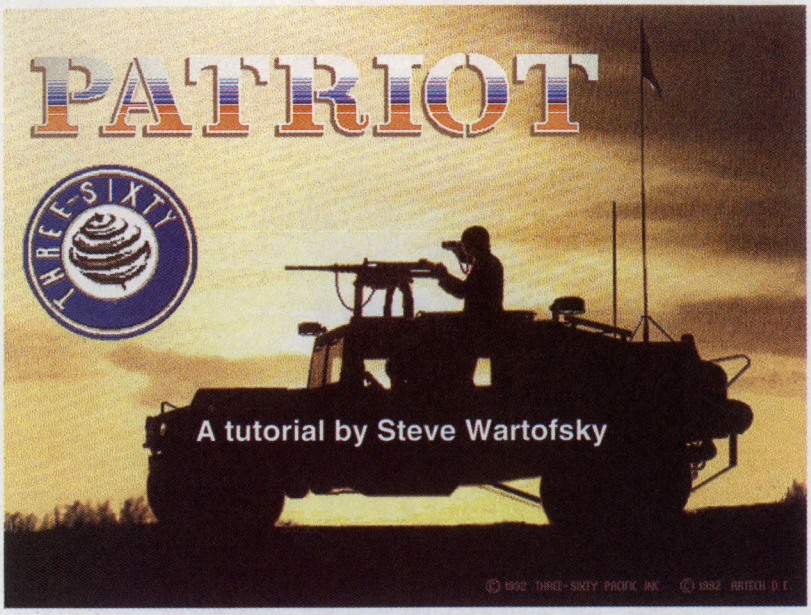

How to come to terms with the massive game that is **Patriot**? The first thing to do is to read the file PATRT.INF. This is a compilation of messages that will help understand some of the mechanics of the system. The concern here is to outline one style of play that will give the player a chance to see just how much there is to **Patriot**, and to make playing the game a little less like walking around inside a black box. So first, let's talk about setup options before even starting the game.

Map options

The following process assumes the player is playing the Coalition side, with Command set to Division level, and an intermediate-size scenario, like DUB3.SCN or DOUBLEII.SCN selected for play. The game is set to play from the Map rather than from the Org chart. Think about the Map Options first: click and hold on the Map menu bar choice, and then drag down and select Options. Green boxes are selected, red boxes are unselected. Set Wells, Pumps, Cities and Weather to 1/8th of Map, Roads and Borders to ¼ of Map, Airfields, Rails, Rivers, Enemy Recon, Unit Symbols and Unit Boundaries to Always On, and Enemy Positions to Always Off. Again, this is just for starters. Play around with these once things get going, of course. Make sure Map is set to Split, and Automatic.

Next, click and hold on the Display menu bar choice, and drag and release on the various Pause at End Of choices. Set Pause at end of turn to On; Pause at end of move by Battalion; Pause at end of Recon by Battalion; Pause at end of Battle by Battalion; and Battle Reports On.

Display options

There, we're ready to go. What the Map option choices do is offer a chance to figure out what kind of map scale that we're dealing with as the Map zips to units during play, by enabling various local features. It would be a good idea to have, say, a Random McNally map of the area at hand to check distances between cities, river locations, and so on. So far I haven't seen any airfields, and am not sure which lines might be rails - this needs further clarification by the game's designers.

What the Display options do is slow **Patriot** way, way down so that, rather than running at lightning speed and generating scads of battle reports, most of which consist of unit abbreviations that are likely to make no sense to newcomers, **Patriot** will step through each of its actions and give the player a chance to reconnoiter what the game is doing. How it proceeds, what happens at each step at the most local levels, and so on.

We have to build this house literally from the ground up. Select Start Game. **Patriot** will pause almost immediately, reporting the move of a battalion. At each pause first make sure the Unit Equipment List is selected in the Air/Marines menu bar drop-down window, and then move the mouse pointer to the Personnel and Equipment window, and click on various items like 'Truck' or 'M110 Hwtzer' to open up the informational window about that particular piece of equipment.

Now, here's the first important clue: read these equipment assessments carefully, and become familiar with the pictures associated with them, and to connect the multi-letter abbreviations with specific types of equipment, and will thus know subsequently that US II 2 has so many tanks, armored personnel carriers, jeeps, support trucks, artillery, and so on.

As each unit is paused, read over the information for all the units whose abbreviations are still unfamiliar. After a few minutes of this, the composition of any particular unit can be assessed. Keep doing this throughout this very first phase of play, ie, gather information on equipment that hasn''t been seen before as each unit is paused.

Equipment guide

All this introduces the 'coffee-table' aspect of **Patriot**; it's very much like paging through an excellent book on the massive variety of military hardware that was involved in the Gulf War. The only glitch I've found so far while doing this is that the 120mm mortar unit when clicked on generates a report for the Iraqi M38. Pretty incredible, considering that there are a good couple of paragraphs each on what must be hundreds of different pieces of equipment.

This information is useful not only for browsing purposes, but will be crucial during play. For instance, US II 3 artillery unit moves. At Pause, click on 'M198 Towed 155' in the Personnel & Equipment window. Note that the M198 can be set up for fire in five minutes, and has excellent sighting capabilities. This means a couple of important things. This piece of artillery will not need much time to set up for use once enemy units have been spotted (a third of a fifteen-minute turn, to be precise), and is likely to be able to fire early and with precision once spotting has taken place.

Along with this fact, it might be a good idea to set the unit to which the M198 is attached to Probe or Defend posture once a battle involving the equipment commences, since artillery doesn't do a very good job running down the road at 40mph. But we'll get to all this later. Suffice it to say right here that learning what equipment is attached to what unit will provide a very precise sense of what each unit, at

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this very local level, is capable of.

Another important equipment tip: if a battalion has lots of trucks in its companies, support should be good for the unit, as clicking on 'Truck' in the Personnel & Equipment list for the unit will indicate. Similarly, if a unit doesn't have much in the way of firepower or armor, or is very lightly equipped, chances are good it'll move fast but be vulnerable. It would thus make a good reconnaissance unit (especially if it has any reconnaissance squads attached to it), or if it's command-and-control. It should therefore be kept well behind the front lines, by putting it in Defend or Delay posture, setting its priority lower, and putting it in Support status for Formation.

Another key step to take at this level: if a unit is paused on a helicopter unit, first, remember or write down the name of the unit, and then change the Air/Marines window from Unit Equipment List to Show Helicopter Support. Find the particular helicopter unit paused on in the list of Helicopter names on the left, and click once on it. There will probably be something like '21 AH-64 Apache Attack' and '12 Kiowa Observat' bars on the right of the Helicopter Support window. Click twice on either bar, and a window will open up to the left. Select 2-4 Observation helicopters to conduct Air Support missions per paused Helicopter Unit, hit OK, and then hit the spacebar to move on to the next unit.

Keep hitting the Space bar, clicking on equipment in the Personnel & Equipment window, and now move on to something new: start checking the Formation settings for each unit. Make sure engineering units are not Line units, unless it's clear from the Division's mission or the local terrain that bridge or berm-building might be part of the tactics of the front line troops in that Division.

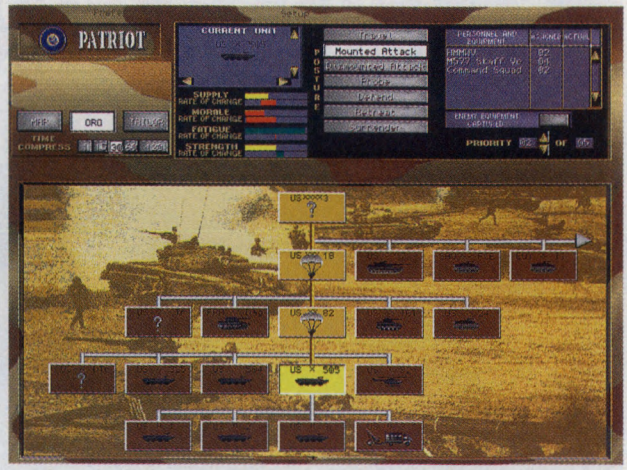
Make sure helicopter units are in general in Covering or Support formation, depending on their likely mission. Make sure lightly armored units with command and control are in support. And, concomitantly, check each highlighted unit on the map (it'll be displayed as light white and blue) to see if it looks like it's in proper relation to other units in its formation. Change the posture of a unit to slow it up if it seems too far forward for its mission (ie set it on Delay or Withdrawal Posture until it's back in proper formation), or to speed up, say, line units that have fallen behind (set them to Mounted Attack or Travel to zip them ahead).

It will be observed that right after hitting the spacebar the highlighted units do indeed move. Some move further and faster than others, too. Reassuring, ain't it? Some sense of the speed of a unit can be determined by how much territory it covers at the Battalion level. Higher up, at the Division or Corps level, it's much harder to discern that units are moving at all, and if so, where.

Recon phase

Having got the very basics of **Patriot** down, and beginning to understand the system better, it's time to speed things up a little: go to the Display menu bar and turn Pause at End of Move Off. The rest of the Allied units will move, and then we'll go to the Reconnaissance phase. With any luck, one of the battalions will spot some Iraqi units very soon, and the game will pause again while the map will snap to the unit that did the spotting.

Check the left map window and see how close the



spotting unit is to the enemy unit it's found. If it's pretty close, and has some good artillery attached, maybe time to put it in Defend posture and raise its Priority to 1, so it will engage. If it's vulnerable, a Covering unit that's run too far from the Line and Support units, perhaps it's time to set the unit's Posture to Delay or Withdrawal, to bring it back behind the heavier Line units, now that its reconnaissance job is done.

If the spotting unit is a Line unit, and has lots of good attack equipment, time to get it out of Mounted Attack posture and put it in Dismounted Attack, Probe or Defend posture, depending on whether one thinks the Iraqi units spotted are retreating, defending in position, engaging in delaying tactics, or advancing on allied units. Take a close look at where the Iraqi units are in relation to any terrain features on the map, so as to be able to tell by next turn what they're doing.

Combine use of Posture and Formation and Priority controls to micro-manage a bunch of units this way, as they gain reconnaissance of enemy units and formations start to need changing in response to the evolving situation. Assume the computer will do nothing at this level for now, and take over as much control as possible. Later, when more familiar with what's going on, more orders can be relegated to the computer to see how it handles these local issues.

Boundary lines

With all that under the belt, the last thing to start fiddling with are the boundary lines. In the Preferences menu bar, select Movement Arrow Style and then select Waypoint Arrows, to get the easiest middle ground between Boundary Lines and Objective Arrows. If a battalion is busy dashing northwest of enemy units to the north, try moving up the command level to Division level (use the Current Unit Window up and down arrows) and, once the maps have reset themselves, click and hold on the red circle at the tip of some of the Waypoint Arrows and pull them over across the small white line towards the units to be engaged.

If attempting to do this with Waypoint Arrows at lower than Division level, the changes often won't take, for some reason. Best to issue these kinds of waypoint commands at higher levels of the command hierarchy. After all, we don't want any court-martials during the action.❑

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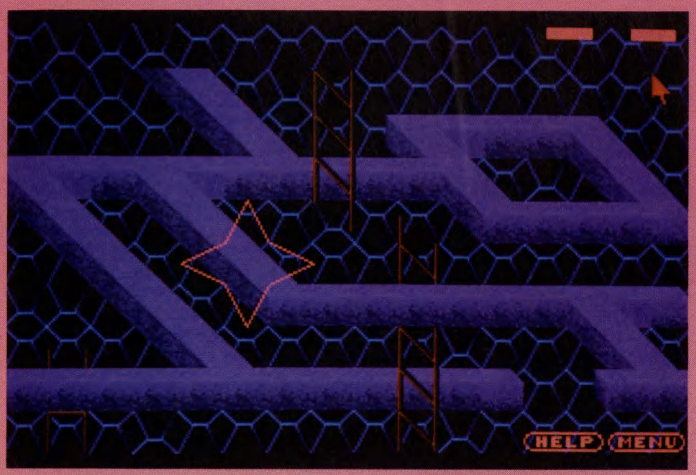

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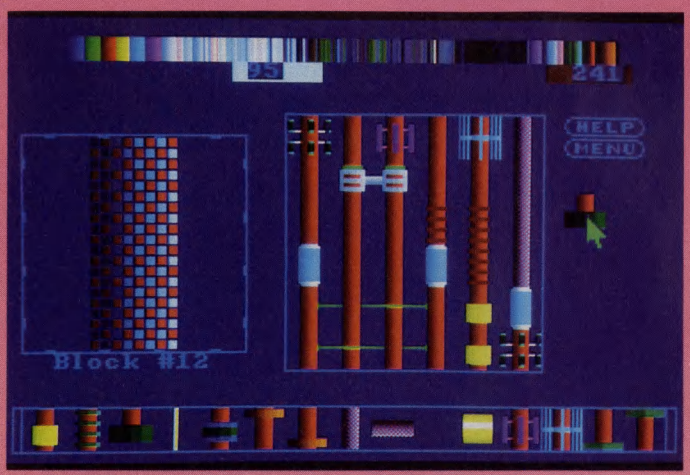
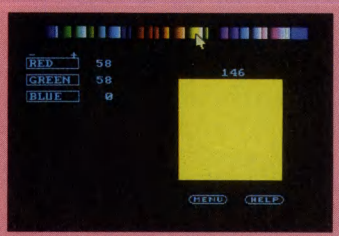
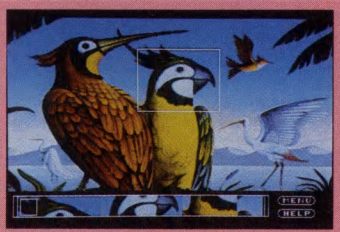


Draw pictures of characters, monsters, and scenes by creating picture blocks.

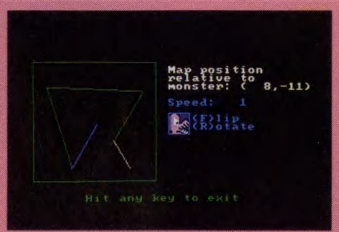


Design Palettes



Import Graphics

Animate Monsters



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Reader Service No. 56

Alone In The Dark

Things that go bump in the night

By Joan McKeown

I have seen the shapes of things to come and have been spinning around **Alone in the Dark** with them for a few weeks now. Aside from the fact that this is a neat action/adventure game, **Alone in the Dark** comes very close to PC Virtual Reality. Close, but no cigar. No helmet, no power glove, no mouse even, just a really good close-to-reality projection. More than adequate for an adventure game but just barely adequate for the action end of things. End, yep, that's how I wound up frequently, on my butt at The End, being dragged through the dungeon by far less than my dream date. Fortunately, the game has a very forgiving restore feature to compensate for the many deadly lessons it teaches.

The roaring thirties

The soul of **Alone in the Dark** is a solid modish mystery thriller with a haunted house, things that go bump in the box plus all the goodies one would expect in a thirties movie. The heart of the game is a mighty Realtime 3D projection engine that drives the interface, and each of the five cameras that follow the player on a soul search of intriguing dimensions.

The star of the show can be either a studious male detective or a demure female relative. Both pack quite a punch, or kick, in a fight. The game begins with the choice of a lead character and a text exposition of the plot. Gameplay is the same with either character. The only difference I found was in the text at the beginning of the introduction scene.

Monster mash

I am surprised at myself because I didn't even miss using a mouse. **Alone in the Dark** is run entirely through keyboard commands and is as smooth as running around in the **Underworlds**. The player's character is displayed at all times in full 3D projection. Character motion is viewed from several different 'camera' angles in each scene. It feels a little like watching the dumb camp counselor in *Friday the 13th*, especially when the yowls 'n howls permeate the house from below. Scary! I keep wanting to yell about doors and lurkers and stuff. Wonderful sense of atmosphere.

The arrow keys provide walking and fighting motions and the space bar allows the character to do things that the player selects from an action menu. I was a long while getting into the game because of the many mashing monsters. After much experimentation I found that the best attack is none at all. Avoidance is the key, or ambush when combat is inevitable. The dirty dogs that leap in from the night can be stopped by pushing furniture in front of the windows. The strolling horrors will not come through closed doors. Standing on a trap door is as effective as sliding a trunk over it since the zombies have a very short attention span. Creepy crawlies and sleeping ghosts should simply be avoided.

Mad Max

There are many items scattered about the mansion, each rendered in 3D and displayed as rotating icons in the copy protection section of the game. As much as I hate copy protection, this one is lovely to look at and practically painless. Just as the game is about to begin the player is asked to select two images from the set of rotating icons. The appropriate set can be found on one of the 256 pages of a 5 cm by 5 cm (2x2inch) book that puts me in mind of the cartoon animation books of the early fifties. Of course, at that size it is easily misplaced. If that happens the entire game is useless.

The music is pleasant and just right for the feeling of the game. The sound effects are superb, especially the cocking of the shotgun. Makes me feel like Mad Max...kachunk..kaboom..kaka doggies! *(pardon? - Ed).*

Amour fou

Alone in the Dark is a true graphic adventure game. The puzzles are mostly fair and the game is loosely linear in that items needed are found in a useful sequence. The easiest path through the house is the reverse of the introduction. Some of the puzzle logic is flawed. One example is a key that is hidden in a vase. The character can only find the key by bashing the vase to bits. This process defies the other logic stem in the game that allows the player to examine closed things like a first aid kit and discover the contents. The game is originally French and perhaps this is romance rather than logic.

In either case, the flaws are far outweighed by the beauty and playability of the game.❑

Designed by
Frederick Raynal

Published by
I-Motion(US)
Infogrames(Europe)

Systems
PC

Graphics
VGA MCGA 256-color graphics modes,

Supports
AdLib, SoundBlaster, Sound Blaster Pro

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Reader Service No. 10

Block Busters

The Magic Candle III

Some game companies try to keep their customers interested in a game series by making changes and improvements to the interface or to the gaming system. Others invest effort into the story, characters, and graphics to make the experience more entertaining. Then again, a third way to sell a sequel is to repair some bugs, insert another plot, and rely on the fact that most people always want to see what they might be missing if they don't pay for another installment in the series. Unfortunately, this is what ***Magic Candle III*** *looked like to me at first; it wasn't a great improvement over it's predecessors.*

The 1.00 version of the game had some bugs but Mindcraft have corrected these. Their policy of immediately sending out upgrades to registered users should ensure minimum inconvenience. The patches mostly fill in missing dialogue, where a character should give the player a clue or important information. There are other fixes that correct problems with the notebook, inventory management and the Soundblaster sound card.

In ***Magic Candle*** *'Book One,' the player guided Lukas XXXXXX in a quest to keep the demon Dreax confined in a magic candle, which was beginning to melt away after the dissappearance of the 44 mages who kept it burning with their spells. In the sequel,* ***The Four and Forty,*** *Lukas and his companions explored the hostile lands of Gurtex to discover the fate of the missing wizards.*

In this third chapter in the battle between the forces of the Children of Light and the forces of Darkness, the game takes the well-established hero south from the island kingdom of Oshcrun to the ancient lands of Solia. His aim is to to discover the cause of a growing blight which ruins crops and mutates animals into evil beasts. King Rebnard is away fighting evil in Gurtex and has taken most of the good equipment with him, so Lukas must assemble and outfit a party of six to help him explore the new lands.

The overall look of the game is reminiscent of Origin's ***Ultima IV****, which is another reason I was rather disappointed in it. It's graphics, minimal music and sound effects just aren't up to the level that most gamers consider standard today. On the plus side, it does have an interesting story, and there are some realistic aspects of daily life that the player must concern himself with. There is the normal amount of 'hack and slash' combat, but characters don't gain experience nor get much loot from the enemy. Some characters whom the party leader recruits can be assigned to stay in a town and work for a daily wage based on their skills, which is collected periodically to fund the party's exploration.*

Instead of advancing through levels by combat, the party members develop their skills by practice or by studying with trainers found throughout the land. Vital statistics are increased by finding the tombs of deities and invoking their spirits to bless the party. Weapons and armor show wear and tear which must be fixed or the item breaks, and magic spells are memorized from books and recalled before casting.

All these activities must be handled by the player and each requires various amounts of time and energy. Other factors that must be considered are overland travel in changing outdoor weather conditions, hunting for food and sleeping when characters become tired. These things add a realistic aspect of time management to the basic game, making it truly a role playing adventure.

Despite the flaws I've detailed, I can marginally recommend ***The Magic Candle III.*** *It doesn't have too much mindless combat, and although there are no real intellectual challenges the quest should keep the player's interest long enough to see Solia saved from the threat of the blight. There will probably be a sequel, as Lukas isn't sure whether this crisis was just a first challenge from an evil power. If so, I hope the designers put more time into improving the the look and sound of this product.*

The Magic Candle III

Designed by
James B Thomas

Published by
Mindcraft Software

Systems
IBM PC

Graphics
VGA

Supports
Mouse, Adlib and Soundblaster cards.

Notes
1 MB extended memory required for Soundblaster digitized sound effects.

Tips

The party leader may be chosen from five set profiles, three male and two female, or characters may be transferred from **The Magic Candle II**. Some customization is allowed for the three companions that Lukas chooses to go with him to explore the blighted forest, so it's really difficult to offer advice here. I chose profile 'C' for the leader, and gave him extra skill in hunting, swordfighting and magic.

For his initial traveling partners I chose Bollo, Kark and Silva. I gave added points to Bollo's carpentry, Kark's metalworking and then gave Silva some skill in gemcutting. Bollo and Silva can be put to work almost immediately at the Telermain carpenter and the gemworks, while Kark may be employed by the metal smith or remain in the party to help fight. Since they only are needed in the party to fight a battle or two before they start working, the player may want to design these characters more with job skills in mind than for combat.

The choices the player makes for Lukas' companions

The Magic Candle III

The ancient Solian lands have new arrivals: Monsters of the Blight!

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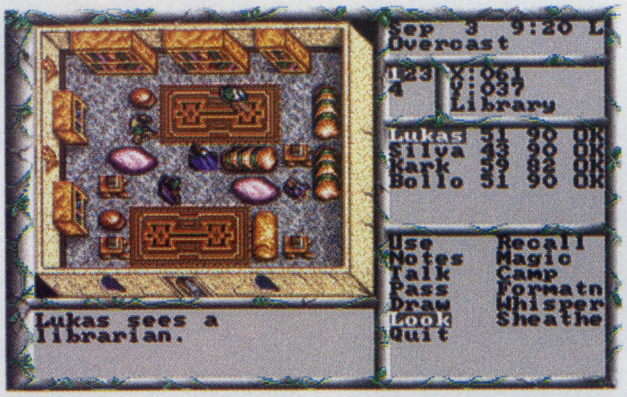

aren't that important, as there are much better characters to be found very shortly. After a short battle in the blighted forest, the Orc prince Garzbondgur will join the party, and although he won't share items or trade them he is essential to the quest. Don't give him anything that the party will want to sell later, and have him to hunt for his own food. Eventually there will be enough good arms and armor for all, and I finally gave him one of the special swords found in the game.

Put the three companions to work at the Telermain shops, then visit Oshcrun castle to find Lukas' old comrades. Sakar the dwarf and Rimfiztrik the wizard are two characters the player can recruit, and they should become permanent members of the party. They may also temporarily recruit Marsa, who starts with a 30 skill in tailoring which can be used in Ketrop.

In Ketrop, start her working and find the halfling Tuff to join the quest. Ask anyone in the halfling town where to find this excellent character, who is skilled in trading, lockpicking, music and soulreading.

Stopping the blight

I should mention that the player will need one representative from each of five character races in the party for the final part of the game. A magic candle is the key to stopping the blight, and creating it requires a sign of unity from the southerners. Besides the human Lukas and the orc prince, the party must have a dwarf, a halfling and an elf for the endgame. There are several well trained hirelings that can meet these requirements to be found throughout the lands, and they can be developed quickly even late in the game by revisiting the resting places of the gods who grant blessings.

The source of the blight

The party I used for most of the game consisted of Lukas, Tuff, Fiz, Garz, Sakar and a female goblin wizard from Serivu named Evixa. A second wizard is an excellent choice, as she brings her own Ishban spellbook to complement Fiz's Felmis book. Although the wizards can't trade books if they each only have one, the player should soon be able to purchase the Demaro book sold by Faranim in Ketrop. With three books and two wizards, the player can shuffle inventory to allow all magic users to learn spells from all the books. Next door to Evixa lives her twin sister Evista, who sells the Alasol book with the Cure spell. This book should be purchased as soon as possible, as the blighted monsters all are able to poison or sicken the party members.

The most important thing to remember in order to find the source of the blight is to completely question everyone in every town and city. Most of the dialogues with townspeople are limited, and each one gives three rotating responses to the 'News' query. Only one of these replies is usually very important, but it will give the player an lead about where to proceed with the investigation. Shopkeepers, wizards and persons who actually tell their name have more complex conversations, and important words are highlighted in red letters. As the player proceeds in the game, some characters will have new information, especially the wizards.

The libraries

There are four libraries in the game, and they provide vital imformation ranging from the lands of Solia to the making of the magic candle itself. The Telermain library yields information to familiarize the player with all the major Solian continents. The Urkabel library can be researched to find some of the combinations that work in the 'Teleportal' chambers, and additional ones can be learned from each of the wizards.

Look for 'Rinora' in the Eisheim library to learn how to reach the upper levels of that tower where the magic candle must finally be used. The party won't be able to enter the Nekros library until they explore the mines of Sora on the land mass of Minalt. When he awakens and blesses the party members, Vorhamme will also tell them the name of the Nekros librarian. The player will research two subjects here, one they will learn after confronting Alvirex in the Tower of Hiltmos, and the other when they have all the candle parts and speak to the ghost of Vella.

Character development

Character development is accomplished both by practicing skills and by invoking the ancient gods. Each one increases certain statistics, and one particular skill as well. Look at the altars in the many temples that are located inside cities for the word that will awaken the deity whose symbol the party will recognize on the wall of the temple. To find the general locations of the burial chambers can be a little harder. The player should talk to all priests they find, as well as persons who might be strongly devoted to a certain god. For example, a fisherman is a good person to ask about Bohar, God of the Winds.

Combat

There are a few things that the player can do to make combat easier and to shorten battles. If someone with good soulreading skill is in the party, they may be able to judge the mood of the opposition. Greedy enemies may leave the scene if the party wants to talk and pay their price. One of the members with a high leadership ability may be successful in rallying the fighters, boosting their courage and agility. Failure allows the enemy to strike first, and if the monsters

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Actual screen photos from the IBM VGA version.

Reader Service No. 10

are enraged the option will almost always fail.

Each party member usually gets two or three chances to act each round, and since the gonshi herb only ensures three attacks it shouldn't be wasted by using it immediately. A character who wants to get the most out of his turns should wait until his second or even his third attack to use a gonshi, which may give him a total of five or six actions per round.

With two wizards in the party, the Jump spell can be invaluable. The fighters can be moved to the enemy, instead of wasting moves getting there on their own. Even better, an opponent to too tough for one fighter can be moved to a position where two characters can reach it. Still another tactic can be used to fight a creature who had a chance to become invisible. The mage can try every square in the combat area without actually casting the spell, and if the spell finds an invisible target it can still be aborted without wasting a turn. Once the creature is found, the wizard may attack it there or bring it within reach of another character.

Probably the toughest enemies are the undead creatures like Necromants and the spell casting Kothspawn. If a Necromant is killed, it will rise again the next round until a Restsoul spell is cast on it's dead form. The good news is, when it rises again it only has a fraction of it's original hitpoints and can be killed again with one stroke. When confronted by a number of these at one time, it is best to kill or critically wound them all, and worry about putting them away permanently in the next round.

The Kothspawn are encountered one at a time, but cast multiple false images before the battle starts. Finding the real one is a matter of trial and error, and the real one should be killed as quickly as possible. Kothspawn cast the Forget spell, and if the mage has a spell ready he'll forget all of the other copies of that spell in memory. This can actually require the party members to flee or the player to reboot the computer if they are fighting undead and all the mages forget the Restsoul spell.

Besides wandering enemy patrols, there are outdoor objects such as strongholds and teleportation chambers that the player won't see unless the party is within one square. The Locate spell will make the monsters within a certain radius visible, but a valuable tip for scanning large outdoor areas is to use the Teleport spell.

Without actually casting it, the mage can see a square grid of locations the party could teleport to. Areas where an enemy patrol, mountain or natural obstacle will not be outlined, including important locations such as temples, caverns, and strongholds.

Armed with the information I've given here the player should be able to discover all the magic words, strongholds, and other clues required to track down the entrance to the Tower of Rinora. The spirit of Vella in Nekros will not give the party the go-ahead needed to enter Snowcrown Deep caverns until they have all the parts of the candle, but heed the information gained from the Nekros library and the goddess Entas. Don't proceed past her resting place unless the party is complete and totally prepared, as there is no return.❑

Greg Ellsworth

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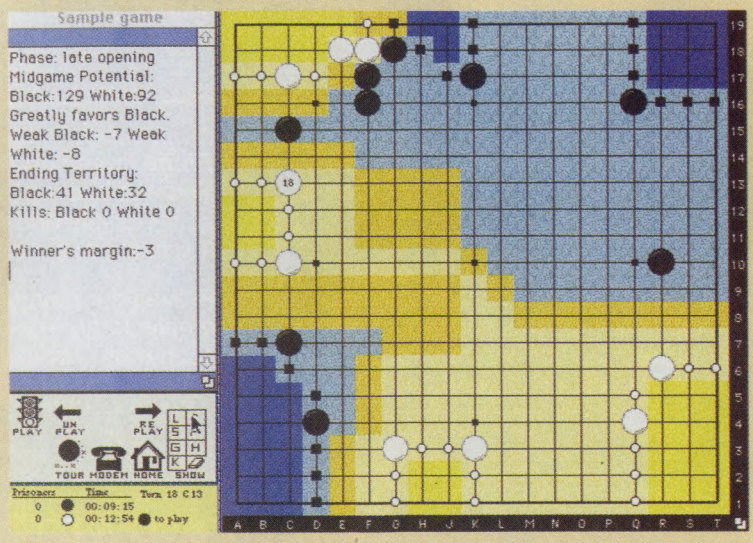

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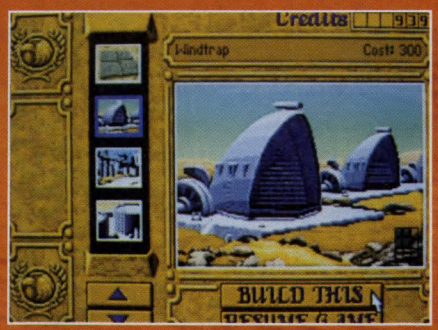

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Reader Service No. 87

Legends of Future Past

Pictures in the Mind

By Andy Backer

Legends of Future Past is an online, non-graphic, role-playing game. Yes, I said non-graphic! It's all text. There isn't even an ASCII map on screen. I have never been overly fond of non-graphic games and was admittedly reluctant to play this one, but I did, and I'm glad. Why? Because I discovered that one does not need graphics to become addicted to a game. Not when the game creates pictures in the mind.

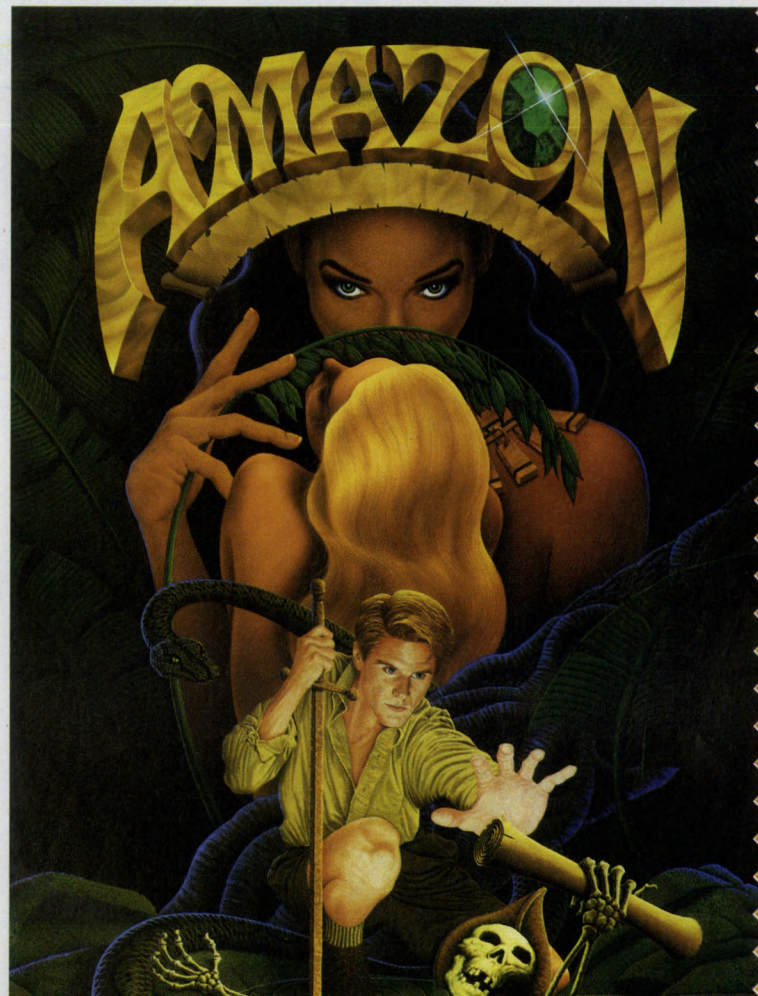
Jon Radoff, Angela Bull and friends have designed their game with loving detail. It's an easy and delightful world in which to role-play. The planet is Andor. The country is the Shattered Realms; the city is Fayd. The Realms are populated with eight different races: Aelfin (elves), Drakin (dragonmen), Ephemeral (phantoms), Highlander (dwarves), Mechanoid (robots with flesh and souls), Murg (burly humanoids), Wolfling (werewolves, but don't ever call them that!) and of course, humans.

The characters have a set of statistics that can be improved by drinking special potions. These potions are beyond the price range of beginners, so the player is advised to take some time rolling characters high in strength and quickness if the character is to be a fighter. (Two races can not improve their statistics by drinking potions because they can't eat or drink: Ephemeral and Mechanoid. They must make do with what they roll at creation.) High empathy is necessary for a good magic-user and high willpower for a good Psionic. A thief needs high agility.

Skills

Experience is most easily gained by fighting monsters. Experience points translate to 'build points.' Build points buy skill training. There are many skills available in which to train, including a large variety of fighting skills. There are four schools of magic: Enchantment, Necromancy, Druidic and Conjuration. There are skills for thieves, for Psionics, and for healers.

There are a great many organizations, many open by invitation only. Some organizations are secret and only those who are in the organization know of its existence! The organizations include six different religions, each with a different God (who will at times answer a Priest's prayers)! There is the Lawkeepers, an organization authorized to arrest wanted criminals. There is also a Thieves Guild,

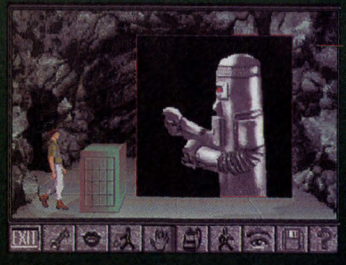


A time when the world seemed more fantastic: and anything was possible!

Journey back in time to the year 1957 on an expedition to the dark heart of the Amazon Basin. A desparate, crazed message sends you on a perilous search through a land where legends come to life, danger hides behind every corner, and incredible treasures wait to be discovered.

AMAZON is designed in the style of the serials of the 1940's and 50's such as Flash Gordon, The Lost City, and Rocketman.

These serials were made up of intriguing, fast paced episodes which placed the hero in unbelievable peril. AMAZON contains 14 exciting episodes filled with plot twists, mysterious characters and heart stopping cliff-hangers. You haven't had this much fun since the drive-in days!



Metal monsters seek your destruction!*

Physicians Guild, a magic guild and a guild of technologists,(who abhor magic).

Whips and chains

There is commerce. There are many shops, including a haberdashery, a tailor's, a cobbler's, a fletcher's, a jeweler's and an armorer's. There is a shop that sells leather and lace! (Even whips and chains!)

The main gathering place is the town square. There, characters sit or lay on the grass, chatting with each other. Healers glance over the population and heal the wounded without asking for a fee.

At times, the unexpected will happen. Some player who is dabbling with magic will unleash a storm strong enough to uproot trees. At other times an evil character will summon monsters to invade the town square. There may be a kidnapping. Rumors abound. Some of the secret organizations may have bizarre and vile rites. I have seen a fellow character impaled by a spell cast in the town square. (He was resurrected. Each character is allowed five free resurrections by Eternity, Inc. Additional lives may be guaranteed with a purchased life insurance policy.)

Actions

The number of action commands available is surprising and allows the PC's to bow or curtsy, smile, grin, tickle, kiss, hug, frown or yawn with a stroke of a hot key or two. They can nod and laugh and dance and jump up and down among other things.

Players can also design macros to mouse in more detailed reactions. And of course the players can type in anything they want their characters to say in a conversation. It's all there to make the role playing experience easier and as realistic as possible.

Role playing is the primary objective of the game. Expeditions are organized by game-masters twice a week, there is a great deal of territory to explore, many monsters to kill, but the real joys of the game are interacting with the other characters in the game. It is possible to just log on and fight a few monsters and then log off, but meeting and interacting with the other characters is what makes Legends much more enjoyable than the typical RPG.

There are many fully developed characters in the game run by some very talented and creative players. The players take great pride in differentiating and developing their characters, and they are always willing to chat with new players and help them get started. Lovers stroll the streets. Characters marry. Priests argue religious dogma. Lawgivers plot raids on thieves. Thieves carry out burglaries. And underneath it all is a power struggle between the more powerful good and evil magic users in the game.

It is a complex world of good and evil, magic, technology, fantasy, adventure and romance and it's all available with an ordinary Terminal program and a phone call twenty-four hours a day. Sessions can be recorded to disk as text files and reviewed in the player's favorite word processor later.

The only drawback (as in all on-line games) is the expense. Six dollars (total charges) an hour is much more than a typical RPG costs, but those players who can afford it will probably think the mind pictures well worth it.❑

Designed by
Jon Radoff and Angela Bull

On-line service
NovaLink (formerly Digital Dreams)

Systems
Any system with a terminal program)

Supports
Hayes compatible modem, mouse

Notes
The total cost (including access charges) is $6 an hour

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*Actual Amazon VGA screens.

Daughter of Serpents

The Cthulu mythos

By Joseph Boone

This new adventure game from Millenium is based on the Cthulu mythos created by the late H P Lovecraft. This dark vision of the world in which we live has held a fascination for countless people ever since its creation in the 1920's. Since Lovecraft's death there has been no shortage of writers who want to add to or redefine the mythos in some way.

Daughter of Serpents is simply the latest in a long line of such attempts. As one who is not terribly knowledgeable regarding the specifics of the Cthulu tales I can only say that the game seems to be well researched and faithful to the original material.

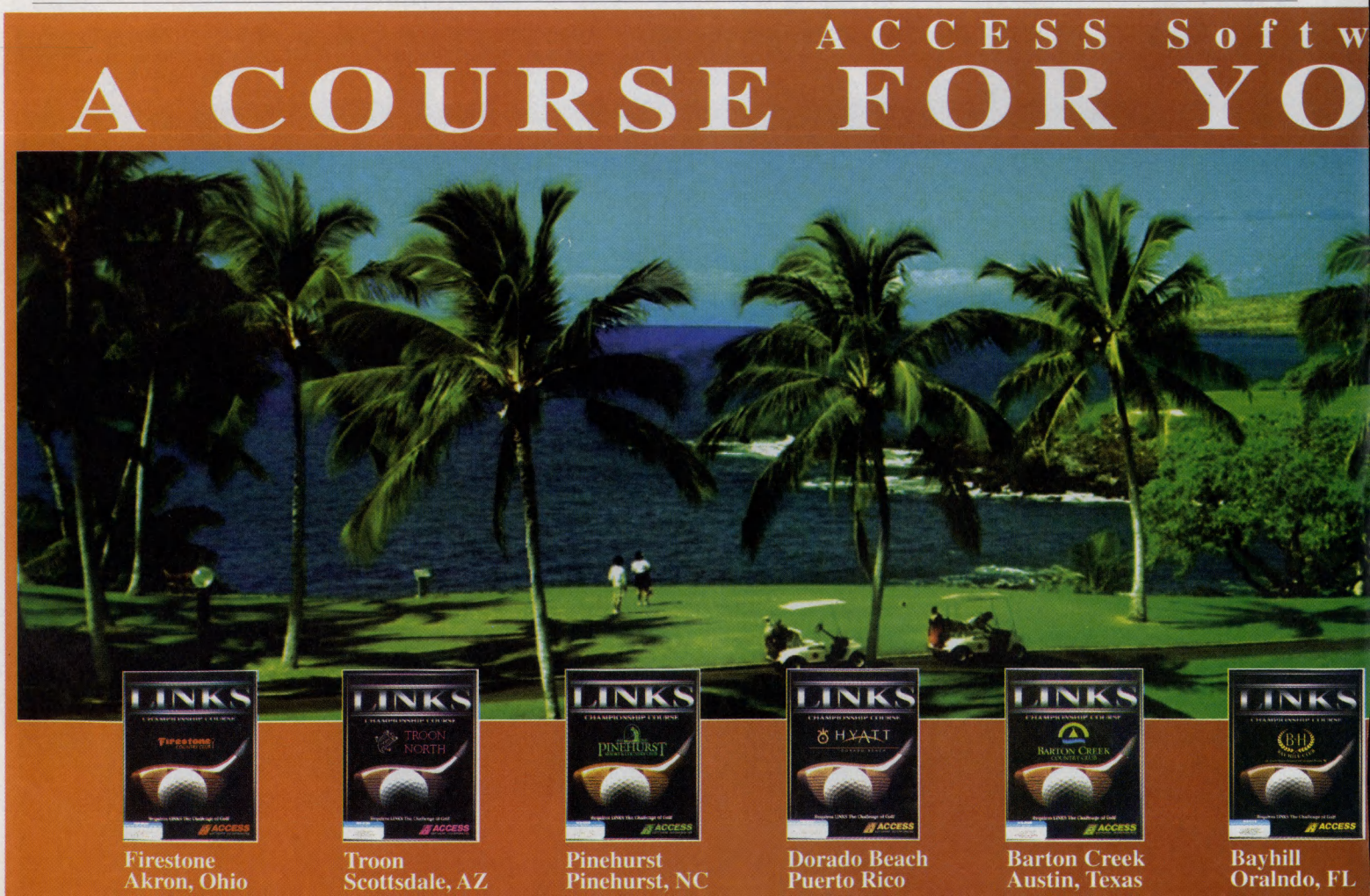
The first thing one notices about **Daughter of Serpents** is the beautiful picture that appears on the monitor as the game begins. The graphics have a dark, moody look but are very atmospheric. The opening sequence is an animated scene depicting a murder in extremely bizarre circumstances. While this scene raised my eyebrows in puzzlement it was also an impressive visual beginning.

As with most new adventure games **Daughter of Serpents** uses a point and click interface. However, this is not a standard run of the mill point and click. The designers have created what they call a new operating system named SIGNOS which stands for Scripted Interactive Graphic Novel Operating System. Hmmm. Visually the game is indeed similar in style to a graphic novel. Word balloons are used to illustrate conversations and most of the backgrounds and characters are largely static.

'Scripted Interactive' is where we start to hit some rough spots. The game certainly has a script but there are many times where it does not feel terribly interactive. There are too many conversations that consist of little more than reading endless word balloons and occassionally selecting the one 'choice' that is offered my character when it is our turn to speak.

While the manual touts the flexibility of gameplay and choices one can make, I found my path limited. Few locations are available to visit and there is little to do once one gets there. Things quickly settled into a series of meetings where I would be told where to go, what to do, and when to do it.

Then there is the interface itself. Point and click systems were originally created to be intuitive and easy to use. I found SIGNOS to be neither.



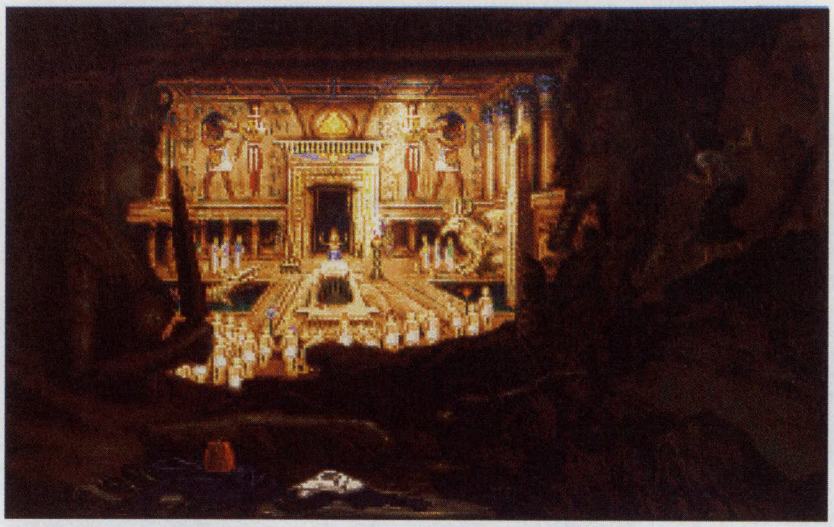
I first tried playing the game without reading the manual. That was a mistake. It quickly became apparent that there were a number of actions I simply could not figure out how to perform.

Even after reading the manual, I found myself needing to refer to it later for some things and there were even a few items that I simply had a hard time deciphering despite reading and re-reading them. While I may have simply been unusually obtuse in this instance, it is clear to me that this interface is a very long way from being intuitive.

If there is an element of **Daughter of Serpents** that is truly compelling it is the story. In fact, I had the feeling that there was so much that the designers wanted to tell that it ultimately interfered with making an enjoyable game.

The conversations tend to be rather long and one sided. During these exchanges we are given all sorts of background information and insights. The characters we see have an admirable degree of depth to them and show at least some personality.

Given the designers preference for the graphic novel format, one wonders if



Daughter of Serpents might not have been better suited to be published in that form instead. In a format where one does not expect true interacvtivity there is no disappointment when it is not provided.

To say that I was disappointed in the game is an understatement. The graphics make a terrific first impression and the Cthulu mythos provides a backdrop rife with interesting possibilities for high adventure.

Unfortunately I felt more like a puppet than an intrepid adventurer. The design team deserves a lot of credit for trying to do something different with this game, but the execution left me cold.❑

Designed by
Chris Elliott & Richard Edwards

Published by
Electronic Arts/ Millenium Interactive

Systems
PC

Graphics
256 color VGA

Supports
Mouse, most soundcards

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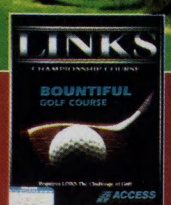

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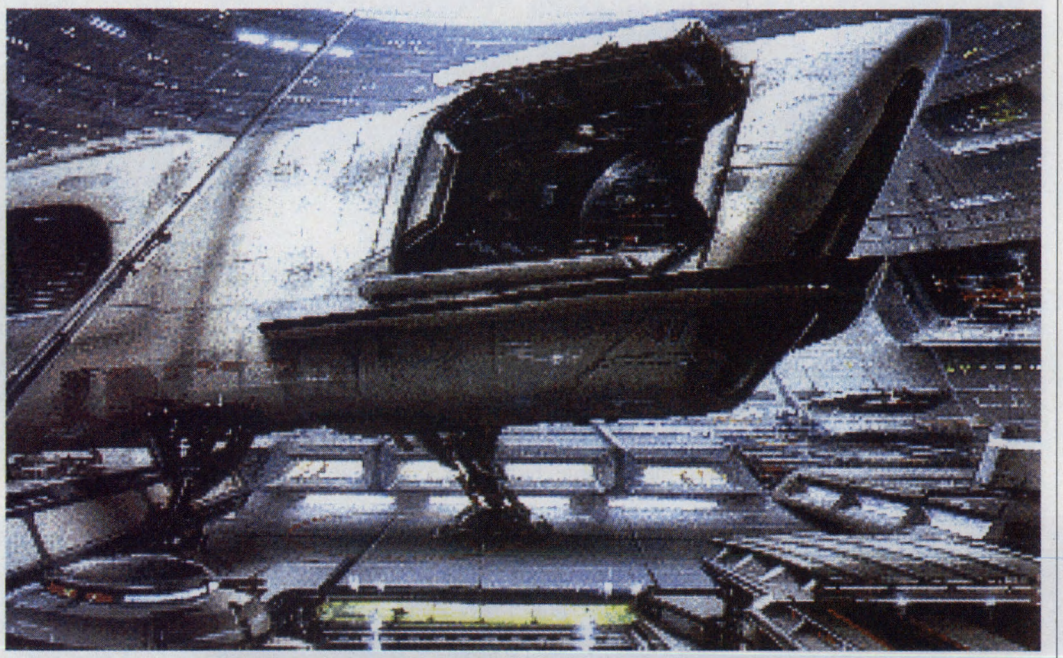
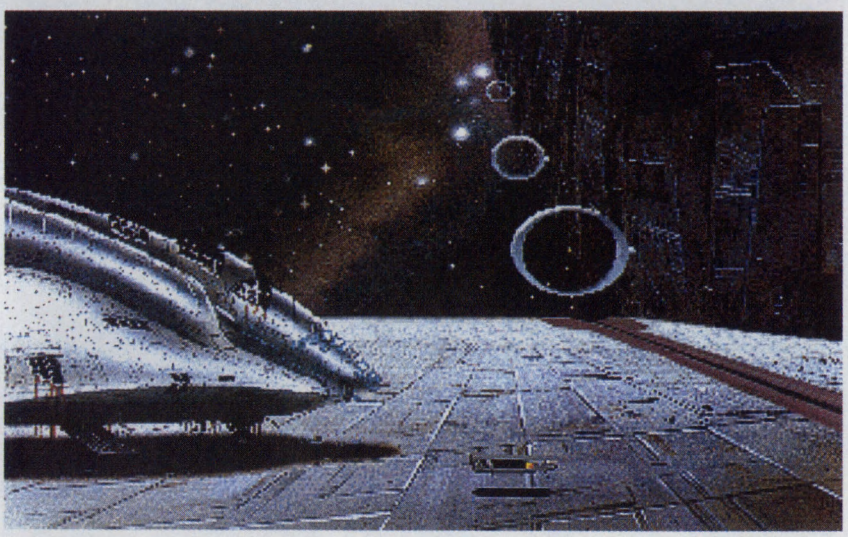
Reader Service No. 89

Ringworld

Revenge of the Patriarch

By Theo Clarke





Designed by
John Jarrett, Chris Hoyt and Robert Heitman

Published by
Tsunami Media

Systems
IBM PC

Supports
Mouse, most soundcards

Why would a man, a woman and a talking tiger explore an artificial planet, shaped like a saucer, at the behest of a two-headed herbivore? Doctor Doolittle's Pushmepullyu never left Earth so this has to be a story from Larry Niven's 'known space.'

Known space is the setting for a series of best-selling sf stories that blend space opera, hardcore sci-fi and human interest. The three dominant species in these stories are humans, the feline Kzin and the mysterious Puppeteers. The Kzin are an aggressive race that fought a long war with the humans whilst the vegetarian Puppeteers supplied remarkable spaceships to both sides. The Puppeteers are cautious creatures and keep the location of their planet a closely guarded secret.

Crunch and Judy

A Human and a Kzin did visit this planet ten years ago and there the Puppeteers revealed technological secrets that have enabled the two races to build the fastest ship known. The two travellers also learnt that the Puppeteers had been performing genetic engineering to enhance Human luck, and culling selected Kzin to increase their passivity. The humans had no major objection to having their luck increased but the Kzin ruler was enraged. The crunch was about to come.

The Patriarch of the Kzin swore revenge on the Puppeteers but their experiments had been so effective that he had to make slow, careful plans. He drummed his claws and snarled nastily while the Kzin secretly built their own ship, identical to the jointly developed Hyperdrive II, and armed it heavily.

Louis Wu, the human who had visited the Puppeteers, begins to suspect that something is amiss. He worries that the Patriarch may exact revenge on him and his Kzin fellow traveller, Speaker-to-animals. Wu warns an old friend of his fears. His friend, Quinn is a mercenary. He asks Quinn to visit Speaker-to-animals and pass on the warning should anything untoward happen. Something untoward does happen: Wu vanishes.

The mighty Quinn

The game opens with Quinn's arrival at the home of Speaker-to-animals. He has barely spoken to the old Kzin's son when the Patriarch's assassins break in with guns blazing. This, combined with the disappearance of his father, convinces the Kzin that he and Quinn should steal the Hyperdrive II and solve the mystery. The two heroes duly hijack the spacecraft and a female human engineer who has to be persuaded of the justness of their cause. The three of them are sitting amicably on the vessel's control deck when a holographic transmission arrives from a Puppeteer. The Puppeteer threatens them with a dire fate if they do not go to the Ringworld and collect some ancient artifacts for him. So, it is off to the Ringworld where the adventurers find signals indicating a num-

ber of possible locations for the key artifacts. This means that they must explore them all.

Up to this point the game flow has been entirely linear. Now the player has seen a map with several interesting locations on it and the spaceship has landed on the Ringworld. The characters get into their scout ship and the player might reasonably expect to be able to choose which site to explore first. But this is not to be. The game is completely linear from end to end. At any point there are few options available to the player. Each location contains no more than about half a dozen rooms and most of those are clearly inappropriate at any particular point. In **Leisure Suit Larry III** a large jokey arrow shows the player where to go early in the game. There is no arrow in **Ringworld** but there is no need for one when the path is so plain.

Lush sequences

The game's ambience is that of a solemn **Space Quest** with less demanding problems. Few of the puzzles have anything other than obvious solutions. I solved the game in under six hours and a lot of that time was spent as a passive viewer. Much of the story is conveyed by long animated sequences that look impressive but add little to the intellectual challenge.

Even where the puzzle could have had some bite the first 'mistake' prompts a hint. For instance, the alien chieftain likes strong liquor and almost any adventure gamer would recognise that the next move is to find an alcoholic drink to give to the fellow. Back on the spaceship, Quinn's first words are to the effect that he must go and find some ale.

Throughout my play I felt as if a condescending fool was leading me by the nose. This is not what I would have expected. The guys from Tsunami learnt their craft at Sierra On-line and they should know the ingredients of a successful adventure. They are right to have abandoned the cute flavour of most Sierra products but they seem to have lost a lot more. **Ringworld** players must accept a loss of freedom of choice. They must also accept reduced wit and reduced challenge. The graphics remain excellent and the animation is particularly skilful, but the soundtrack is as unremarkable as the puzzles.

The game is a huge disappointment. Tsunami have come up with an excellent engine that is robust and simple to use, and they have applied it to a rich milieu that is packed with opportunities for visual excitement and clever tales. A strong story with sophisticated animated graphics cannot compensate for the lack of real puzzles, however. Perhaps diehard Niven fans will feel differently.❑

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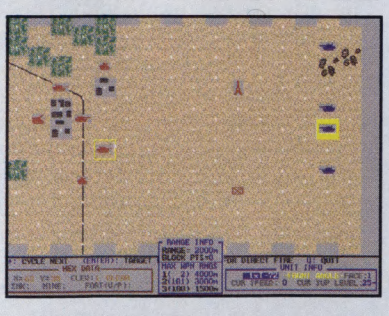

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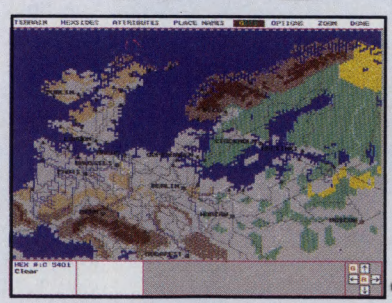

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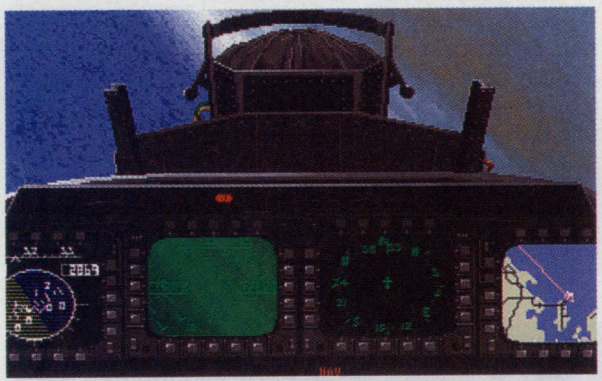
COMMANDER CRUNCH REPORTS FROM THE HANGAR

Crunch finds a co-pilot for F-15 Strike Eagle III



The latest bit of excitement has been flying front-seat/back-seat in MicroProse's new **F-15 Strike Eagle III**. This has got to be one of the more unique and more exciting experiences in software entertainment, a regular multi-player extravaganza; sure, there are a bunch of modem games out now, but how many of them provide the opportunity for co-operative play in such an intimate way? **F-15 Strike Eagle III** puts two players at the opposite ends of a telephone line (or better yet, direct via null modem) with one flying the plane and the other one managing weapons, as WSO.

Heads or tails

Fellow scribe Lee Johnson agreed to take the back seat on our test-run of this thing, figuring there'd be more chance that way that we'd do something other than augering into the ground. We warmed the simulations and computers up first in head-to-head mode, ye olde standby.

F-15SE III is not the hottest dogfighting simulation around, but for someone with my reflexes, it was just perfect. Not that I could get any kind of shot in on Lee, but he apparently enjoyed my acrobatic maneuvers immensely. Flight is my specialty, no doubt about it.

I also tried out the Allied mode. That's kind of interesting, considering that it really takes coordination of airspeed and flight profile to stay in anything looking like formation; and it takes staying in formation to do anything significant to a target. Lee was designated air cover, since he'd done such a great job knocking me out of the sky; first time through he did a wonderful job of pranging right into a mountainside.

Unfortunately, there wasn't the squeal of agony and technicolor explosion I was hoping for, just a generic message from the computer (or AWACS, as the fiction would have it). Suffice to say, don't do Allied mode long distance without having practiced a lot first, and be very careful to remain cooperative when flying. It's all too easy in Allied mode to spend most of the time either waiting for the wingman, or catching up to the flight leader, depending who's where.

Now down to the dirty work: we used two phone lines, one for the computers and one for voice which is actually a lot more exciting than using the 'chat' option in the game. Communication's much faster, and each player can cue in on the other's responses to what's going on almost instantaneously this way (alright, alright, so we spent most of the time on the voice line trying to get the modem routines optimized to work well; but *if* I'd been willing to donate more blood to Ma Bell it would've been great to stay on voice line the whole way through).

We set up the theatre, the mode, the mission, studied the primary and secondary and off we went! As caller I had the joy of selecting the right weapons, so I shut Lee out of being able to do anything interesting by loading the plane up entirely with air-to-air missiles (wrong again - for the sake of expediency we went with the default loadout, though I've learned not to do that since then).

From the ground up

Some careful, skilled attention was paid to the most efficient and quiet ingress. We were in the Saudi Arabia theatre, so it made sense to skirt along the coastline at under 500 feet until near the target. At this early stage of experience with the game Lee knew more about running the radar than I did, so he intelligently coaxed me to climb up high enough so he could get some sort of glimpse of the target more than a few hundred feet out from it.

Between his coaxing and my leaping around the sky, the target was spotted and locked in; all I had to do was fly towards it and then push the button at the right time. Lee had to suffer the exasperating experience of telling me, 'no! left more! higher! no no, pull *up* — we're about to plunge into the ground!! now, a little right.... that's it... level out....LEVEL OUT, *PLEASE*... thanks...'

The primary target went down like the Tower of Babel on a late Sunday afternoon, and there we were, cheering away, slapping our modems on the back (whoops, broke the connection, call again...) when someone with an AK-47 took out the front windshield (or maybe I forgot we were at 200 feet, I'm not sure).

Since this glowing experience I've

learned a few important things about **F-15 SE III** (I'm still focused on the Saudi Arabian theatre): first of all, it's crucial to start peeping via air-to-ground radar at the target as far out as possible. In fact, use the A-G mode to identify potential ground radar and, as with **F-117A**, work hard to 'thread the needle' (ie fly directly towards or away from doppler radar, and around continuous or pulse-wave radar) between units that might be on spotting duty.

It's useful to get the big picture in the eighty-miles-out mode first, at two thousand feet up or so, and then as the plane gets closer in, drop down to a thousand feet and use the forty-miles-out range to keep an eye on upcoming ground cover. About thirty miles from target, start getting in low but still keep the radar on to identify ground units. Only turn the A-G radar off if a 'blip' signals an enemy trying to track. Then get really low to fly under radar cover.

Air intercepts

Secondly, anticipate air attacks prior to releasing air-to-ground ordnance only if Ground Control Intercept (GCI, number 9) locks on. If there are some 9s tracking, they're vectoring in other aircraft to see what's up. Once some noise has been made, definitely watch out for air intercepts. **F-15 SE III** makes this aspect of a mission relatively straightforward to deal with, so that dogfighting doesn't take up more than its fair share of the whole experience. Some air targets will pull one up into high radar visibility from the ground; sorry, life's like that sometimes. Over and out.❑

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WCS™ (Throttle)
Used in conjunction with your joystick

RCS™ (Rudder Pedals)

The Sports Locker

World Circuit and Car and Driver: Joseph McCullough hits the road

World Circuit

Designed by
Geoff Crammond

Published by
Microprose

Systems
IBM PC/Amiga

Graphics
VGA

Supports
All major sound cards, joystick

Players
One, or up to 26 in multi-play mode

Car and Driver

Designed by
Edward Lerner

Published by
Electronic Arts

Systems
IBM PC

Graphics
VGA/MCGA

Supports
All major sound cards, mouse, joystick

Players
One; two with modem, network, or null modem cable connection

Racing simulations have never been more than a passing fancy for me. With the possible exception of **Indy 500**, no computer game has come close to replicating the sensation of rocketing around the track strapped to a 2000 pound chunk of metal, rubber, and carbon fibre. G-forces, the rumble of a V-12 engine reverberating up the spine, and a sense of control are nearly impossible to simulate without the special hardware seen on some of the more elaborate arcade racing games.

Because of this sense of detachment, no racing game has ever stayed on my hard drive for more than a few weeks. Microprose and Electronic Arts have tried their best to change all that, however, with the release of their eagerly-anticipated **World Circuit** and **Car and Driver** racing games.

One for the road

World Circuit simulates an entire Formula 1 racing season, complete with all 26 teams, detailed replications of all circuits raced, and racing-team responsibilities such as car set-up and race management. **Car and Driver** allows the player to climb behind the wheel of ten of history's hottest cars and test their limits on ten radically different courses. Both games offer something new and exciting to the auto enthusiast, but only one is liable to remain on my computer long after this column is published.

Car and Driver can be linked via modem, null modem cable, or network so two gear-heads can fight for superiority over any of the ten courses supplied with the game. In addition, the tracks simulate any racing situation imaginable. The player can cruise through the San Dimas Mall parking lot, rocket around a racing oval, tempt fate on one of three public highways, burn rubber on a drag strip, or search for the ultimate driving line on an autocross circuit or three other traditional race tracks. It also has a tilt-camera feature which simulates a driver turning his head as he enters a curve. This assists the player in managing the game's twists and turns.

World Circuit was released last year for the Amiga, but that doesn't mean that the PC version is stale or dated. Its innovations include a variety of driving aids, such as suggested gear, optimum racing line, and automatic breaking, which allow the experienced or inexperienced gamer to find a suitable difficulty level. It also has a unique player-management system which allows multiple human players to race on the same circuit at the same time.

Each player chooses a car and qualifies to determine starting position. Then, during the race, the computer drives all other cars while the first human player drives a few laps. When it is time to change drivers, the program manager signals. The next player then jumps behind the wheel of his car and takes over. This process continues until the end of the race. Race length and drive-time distribution can be set within the program. It's not modem play, but it will suffice until Microprose releases their modem-play update later this year.

In gear

Unfortunately, while **Car and Driver** offers some exciting new features, it doesn't have the staying power of a top-notch game like **World Circuit**. Anyone who has played any of the **Test Driver** series of driving simulations will find little excitement with this offering. The graphics are boxy and ill-defined (even at the highest resolution setting), which leaves the player guessing what lies ahead on the track. At simulated speeds of up to 200 mph, poor graphics can ruin a driver's ability to anticipate the next turn. In addition, the sound is little more than a garbled engine whine (I think that's what it's supposed to be!). The lack of tire squeals or any recognizable exterior noise prevents the driver from knowing when he's about to lose traction and skid off the track.

Steer clear

The steering controls in **Car and Driver** are numb at best. Forget trying to use a mouse or the keyboard. The joystick is little better. The game seems to have only three steering settings. Turn the stick slightly, no matter how slightly, and the car makes a slight turn. Go past some magical point in the joystick's travel and the game jumps to the next setting — normal turn. Push a little further and the car makes a sharp turn. Non-linear steering like this makes it very difficult to control any of the cars in this game.

Finally, the game is really not a racing simulation, but a driving simulation. That is, except for a few random vehicles

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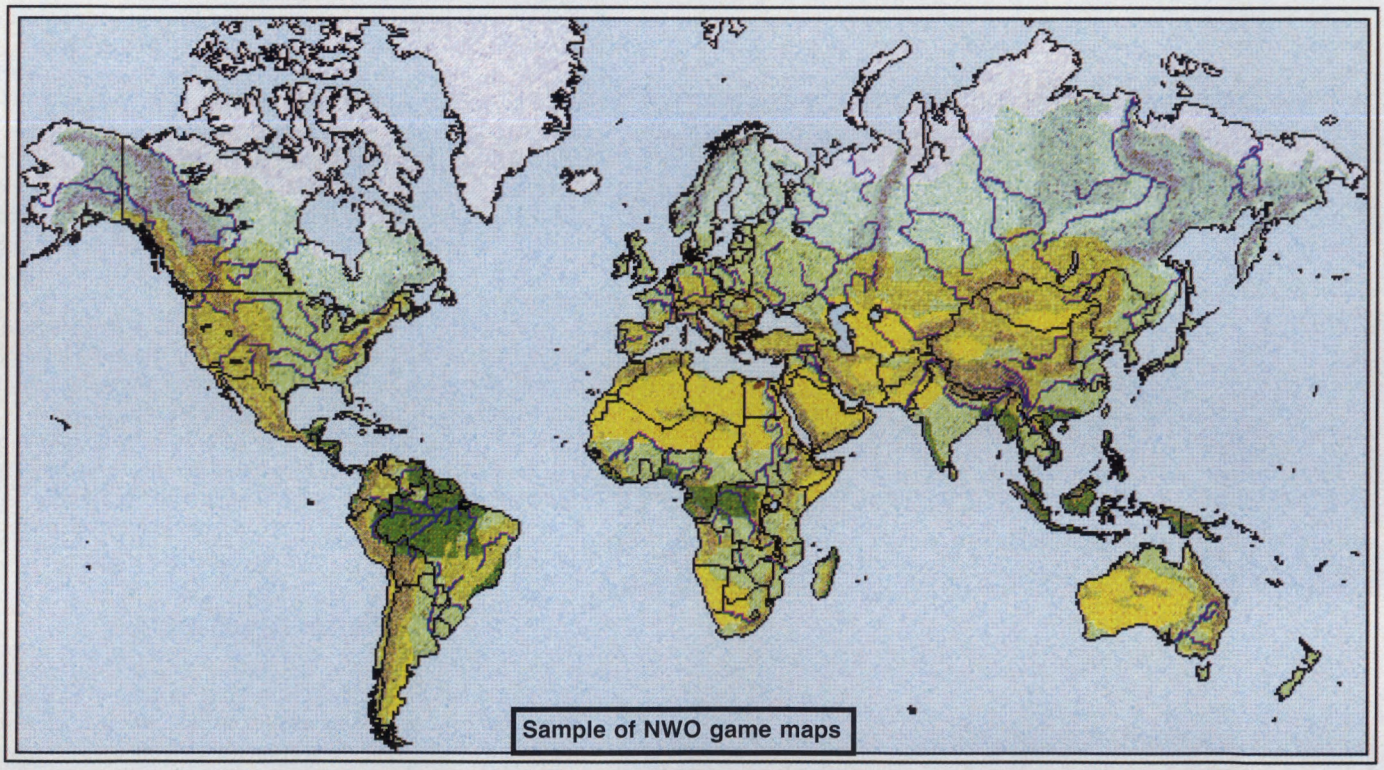

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Below: World Circuit

on the public courses, the player does not race against any computer-generated opposition. The game does record the player's attempts at each track and uses these replays as opponents once enough have been generated, but who wants to race against themself all day? It's fortunate the game supports modem play, because without this, it would fail for lack of any significant exterior challenge.

Braking even

It seems that everything wrong in **Car and Driver** is done right in **World Circuit**. The graphics are first-rate, and aid the driver instead of interfering. The sound is also good. In addition to a fairly accurate engine noise, the game offers tire squeals when the car is about to skid. One shortcoming, however, is that it does not give any aural clue when another car is nearby or passing.

Superior graphics and sound, though, don't define a superior racing simulation. A feeling of control over the car is the holy grail in this type of game, and Microprose seems to have found it when programming **World Circuit**. There is not one, but three types of steering offered: linear, non-linear, and switched. Also included is 'steering help,' or the controversial 'line magnet' derided by many as making the game too easy. Microprose has made this an option in the PC version of this game, thus satisfying the purist and the novice alike. The same settings (linear, et al) are offered for braking as well. The driver can also opt to have 'traction help' turned on, which essentially adds a limited-slip differential to the rear axle of his car.

If Microprose had stopped here, **World Circuit** would already be a marvel to play. Instead, they injected a dose of strategy to make the game a true champion. Succeeding at the game's more difficult ability levels requires the player to know the course intimately and to be able to set up his car to take advantage of the circuit's dynamics. This is no easy task, especially setting the car's gear ratios. With hard work, however, comes reward, which makes the game even more enjoyable.

Rene Arnoux

The computer opponents are a challenge to overtake. They seem bent on running any opposition off the track at any opportunity (which can be very annoying), but at least they offer some type of exterior challenge to the driver. When Microprose releases their modem-play upgrade later this year, the game will be complete.

World Circuit is truly world class. Microprose should be commended for releasing such a complete product to a market starved for great racing games. **Car and Driver**, on the other hand, is passable, but definitely not as refined as **World Circuit**. Some might complain that comparing a driving simulation to a racing simulation is unfair; but **Car and Driver** fails to equal **World Circuit** in the features the two games have in common (car control, graphics, sound, configuration options, etc.).

Those who are searching for a new modem game may be swayed toward **Car and Driver**, but my suggestion for such users is to wait until Microprose releases their modem-play upgrade to **World Circuit**.❑

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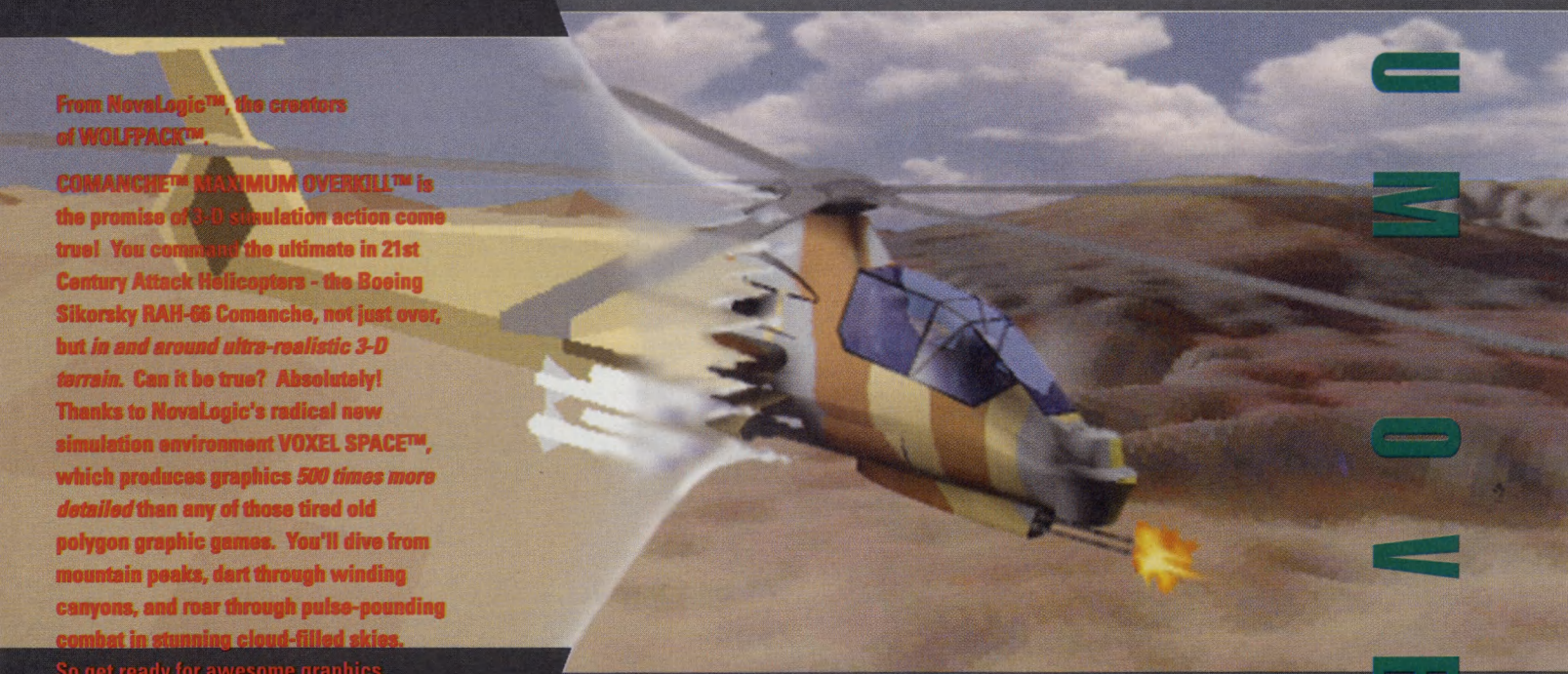

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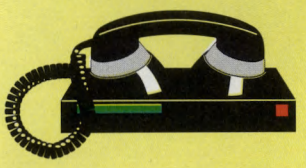

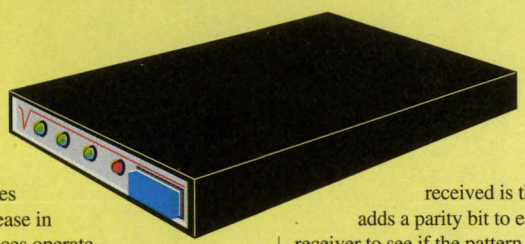

Along with increased modem sales has come a corresponding increase in questions about how these devices operate. Hopefully the following article will answer some questions for readers new to modem usage, and maybe contain some information that experienced users may not have known.

Any discussion about modems needs to start with what they do. In simplest terms it's a device that converts the digital signals that are output from a computer's serial port to a modulated analog signal that can be transmitted through phone lines. (That's the screech that can be heard if a user picks up a phone on a line a modem is using.) It also converts incoming analog signals to a digital format the computer can utilize. Modem stands for MOdulator/DEModulator.

On baud

Modem speed is measured in two ways. The most common is how many bits per second the modem can transmit data. Bps is often used interchangeably with the term baud rate. A baud (named after a French communication pioneer named Baudot) is a change in frequency or line voltage in an analog device, such as a telephone line. Baud rate actually refers to the number of times per second that switching can occur in a communication channel. Analog channels have a practical limit of 2400 baud or frequency changes per second.

Newer modems can increase the bps using standard phone lines by pushing current technology limits, and better packet control. That is why readers with access to older phone systems may find a 9600 bps modem may not be able to communicate at its top speed. With the faster modems, the bits per second can be substantially higher than the baud rate. Again, the terms baud and bits per second are substituted for one another regularly. 9600 bps modems are slowly gaining ground, and if a reader is planning on doing a bunch of uploading or downloading, they quickly pay for themselves in savings on phone bills.

Attaining parity

Some other terms used are data bits, stop bits, and parity. Data bits refer to the number of bits allowed to form a character. Seven bits are used for text, eight bits for binary data. Most of the older mainframes communicated with seven bits. Many of today's on-line systems use eight bit. This allows the transfer of other files beside text. Stop bits are the signal the system uses to represent the end of the character's bits. This lets the computer know a new character is coming.

Parity is the modem's way of checking that the information it received is the same as was sent. To do this, the software adds a parity bit to each character, which is then checked by the receiver to see if the pattern matches. It does this by adding the binary numbers for a character, then adding a bit if the number is odd to make it even. The receiving unit then checks to see if the character has an even number of bits. If it doesn't, it requests that character be sent again. If the sum is even, it removes the parity bit. This is an example of even parity, but odd and none are also used.

Another parameter is duplex. Duplex deals with the way characters are sent from the keyboard to the monitor. In full duplex, characters are displayed at the local monitor only after they have been sent to the remote system, which transmits them back for the display. Half duplex sends the characters directly to the screen. If a user sees everything he types twice, full duplex needs to be chosen in the software. If nothing displays, half duplex is the proper setting.

Shake hands

Handshaking is another term modem users will see. This deals with the way serial communications are dealt with over a phone line. It is the method computers use so that one device won't transmit till the other is ready to receive. There are two common techniques for this. The first is XON/XOFF. XON/XOFF uses Ctrl-S to pause and Ctrl-Q to resume transmissions. The second is ETX/ACK, which uses the ASCII character Ctrl-C to control communication.

To operate a modem some sort of software will need to be used, either a game that supports modem play or a dedicated communications software package such as Procomm or Procomm Plus for Windows (two of the most popular programs on the market).

The software handles sending the proper signals for such things as getting the modem's attention or hanging up. Most modems for PC's use the Hayes modem command set or a variant. A modem that is Hayes compatible means that it will respond to the standard Hayes command structure. It is possible to use a modem without software, but only people who enjoy having teeth removed with no anesthesia would probably want to try. A user would need to be VERY familiar with the Hayes command set to attempt it. Seeing as most modems come bundled with basic but useable communications software today, most people will never be exposed to these commands.

What's the protocol?

Another common is: what are all the different protocols for? Protocols are the way computers communicate during file transfers. Both

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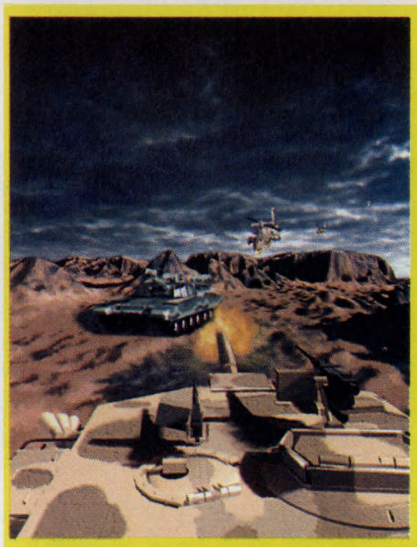

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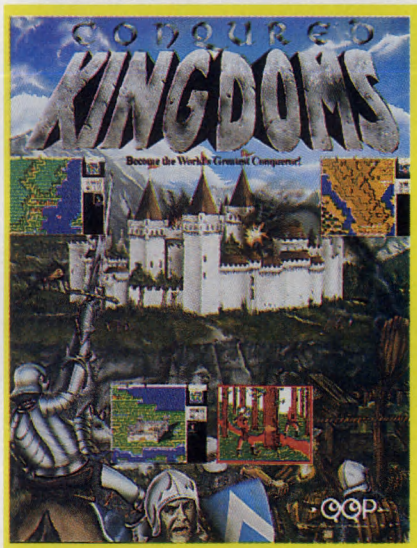

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systems need to use the same modem parameters, such as 2400,N,8,1. In addition, they need to agree on how the file is to be transferred and how the process is to be checked during transfer for errors, if it is checked at all. There are many protocols available, such as YModem batch, Kermit, and CompuServe B. The best way to handle choosing a protocol is to see which one the on-line system being used recommends. Xmodem is a protocol that comes with virtually every communications package. If all else fails, it is reliable but slow.

Making connections

Many of today's games feature modem capabilities. Usually the connection is made outside the game, then the game is started. Here are a few things to watch for if readers are having problems getting connected:

- Shut off any call waiting or other special services on the phone line.
- If the screen is garbled, check that both computers are using the same communication parameters (ie. 2400,N,8,1).
- Check the handshake setting, if any is being used.
- The person with the slower modem may need to initiate contact if the faster modem is having trouble recognizing the slower speed setting required (happens with some older modems).
- If everything typed is displayed twice or not seen, check the duplex setting.
- If there is a lot of garbage that shows up during connections, a line filter may be needed.
- If there are certain appliances near the phone jack, some interference may be noticed.
- Old phone lines may have a lot of noise on them. New lines may need to be installed.

Once everything is working correctly, keep a log with all the settings listed. This could help save time at a future date. Upgrade the communication package being used if needed features are missing. Many of the newer offerings automate the logging-on procedure, identifying the parameters in effect.

Joining an on-line service with a modem games forum can also help. The experienced gamers can often provide invaluable advice. Finally, get a beginner's guide to modems if more information is wanted. And if all this fails, drop us a line.

I hope this clears up some of the questions that surround modem communications for beginners. A modem can add a new level to game play. Squashing and demoralizing a human opponent is more satisfying than all the victories over silicon softies put together.

Jargon Buster

Analog transmission: Communications that use a continuous signal varied by the amplification of the signal.

- Asynchronous communications: A method of information transference that is accomplished by separating individual characters with start and stop bits.
- ANSI: A standard for information display on a computer's monitor.
- ASCII: A standard character set that consists of 92 upper and lowercase letters and 32 control characters. Okay for English text, but usually inadequate for foreign languages.
- AT commands: Commands used in the Hayes command set to use a modem. 'AT' precedes the commands, which gets the modem's attention.
- AUX: The communications port used by DOS (usually COM 1).
- Background noise: Extra signals that can occur over phone lines. These additional signals corrupt the flow of data.
- Baud Rate: A measurement of speed using the number of times a modem switches the frequency of the signal per second. Not the same as Bits Per Second, or bps.
- BBS: An electronic Bulletin Board System; BBS's often have file libraries and on-line chat features as part of their services.
- Binary: When referring to files, any file that is not a pure ASCII text file.
- Bps: Stands for bits per second, a truer measure than baud rate of how much information a modem transmits.
- COM port: A serial port installed on a PC. Used for among other things modem communications.
- Digital signals:The format of a signal generated by computers. It usually is a binary scheme with the signal either on or off, represented by a 1 or 0.
- Download: The process of transferring a file or some kind of information from a remote system.
- Duplex: A parameter that determines how keyboard input is displayed to the monitor.
- ETX/ACK: A handshaking protocol.
- Even parity: Error checking using an even number scheme.
- Forum: An electronic meeting place on-line for people to share ideas. Also referred to as SIG's or special interest groups.
- Full duplex: Characters from the keyboard are sent to a remote system which then sends them back for display on the monitor. Signals are sent and received at the same time.
- GIF: A graphic format supported by Compuserve which contains all the information needed for the graphic to be viewed on many system types.
- Half duplex: Characters from the keyboard are displayed directly to the monitor.
- Information service: A system that has information available for retrieval, usually of a specialized nature.
- Kermit: A protocol written primarily for use with main frames which work with seven bits.
- Log on: The process of establishing communications with a remote system.
- Modem: A device that converts analog to digital or digital to analog signals.
- No Parity: A parameter that disables error checking.
- Null modem cable: A cable that allows the connection of two computers directly without a modem.
- Off Line: Breaking the connection with a remote system.
- On Line: Connection with a remote system.
- On-line Service: A commercial, multi-user bbs. Many features are available, such as stock quotes, movie reviews, games, file libraries, etc. Some of the more common include CompuServe, GEnie, America On-Line, and Prodigy.
- Procomm Plus: The commercial version of an original shareware communication package. Arguably the most popular software package for modem use, with over half a million copies sold.
- Protocol: The method two systems use to transfer a file and check for errors during that transfer.
- RS-232C: A standard concerning the asynchronous transmission of computer data. Used by IBM PC's or compatibles.
- RS-422: The standard for asynchronous transmission of data on McIntoshes.
- Script: A pre-defined series of commands and activities that run whenever the script is used. Many communications packages use scripts to automate the log-on procedure for on-line services.
- Serial port: Often referred to as a COM port.
- SIG: A special interest group on-line for members who share interests.
- Start bit: The bit that marks the beginning of a character.
- Stop bit: The bit that marks the end of a character.
- SYSOP: The system operator, or person, who is responsible for maintaining a BBS.
- Terminal emulation: Software which 'fools' an on-line computer into thinking a PC is a standard terminal attached to the system. Common emulations include TTY (almost always a safe choice if unsure), DEC VT100 (ANSI), or a DEC VT52.
- Upload: To transfer a file to a remote system.
- VDT: Video display terminal, or the monitor.
- XModem: A file transfer protocol developed originally for CP/M computers, it is reliable but slow.
- YModem: A protocol that transfers larger packets and is more efficient at multiple file transfers. Usually faster than XModem.
- ZModem: A protocol that sends data in a constant stream. The fastest except if there is a lot of line noise.

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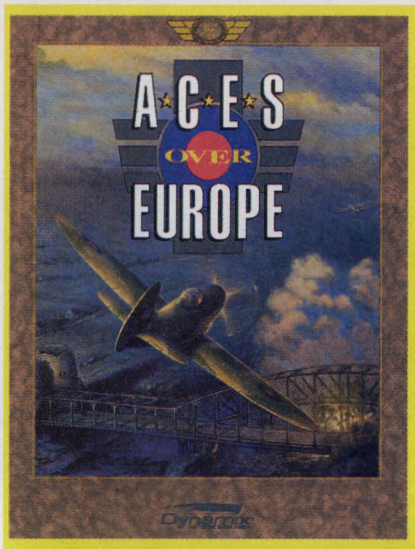
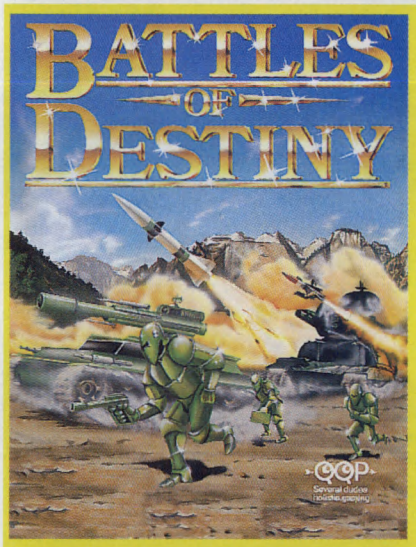
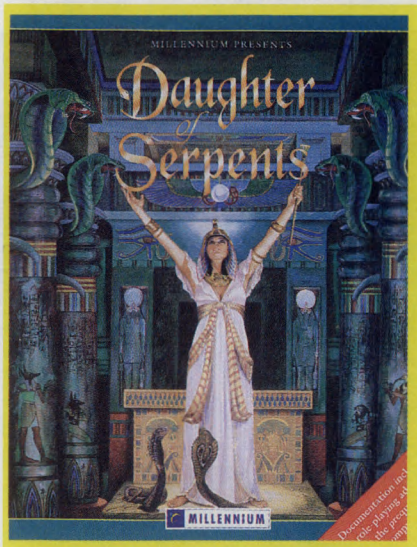


In **'ACES OVER EUROPE'** you soar into air combat over WWII Europe. Dive in and take out trains, barges, staff cars, tanks, and more with aircraft like the P51 Mustang, Focke-Wulf 190, and Messerschmitt 190. Features historic flight maneuvers, ability to lock view on a single target, and modem support. **$46**



In **'BATTLES OF DESTINY'** you must seek out and destroy up to 3 opponents in order to conquer the world. Features modem play, air, ground and naval combat, challenging artificial intelligence, 22 different units to construct, more than 20 worlds to conquer, campaign style play, and a complete player history. **$38**



'DAUGHTER OF SERPENTS' is an epic cinematic adventure, meticulously researched in every detail with original 1920's materials from Thomas Cooks. Features full screen graphics, animated icon interface, a complex and absorbing story line which varies depending on your chosen character's profession & skills. **$32**

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Reader Service No. 1

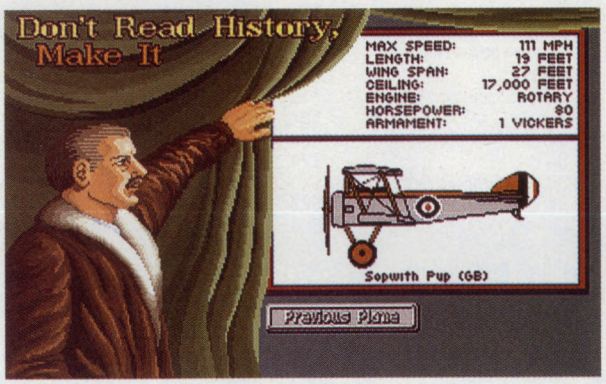
Modem Games to Go

the A-Z of modem compatible games by Brian Walker

Flight Sims

Falcon 3.0
Spectrum Holobyte
Systems: PC
Capable of full and null modem connections and Novell network. Best strategic flight sim currently available. Expected to link up to in the Electronic Battlefield with the forthcoming **A10**. Reviewed issue 16.

Flight Simulator 4
Sublogic
Systems: PC
Full and null modem capable.



Knights of the Sky

Knights of the Sky
Microprose
Systems: PC, Amiga
Null modem and full modem link supported. World War I dogfights. Woof! Woof!
Reviewed issue 5.

Tank
Spectrum Holobyte
Systems: PC
Supports full and null modem connections.

688 Attack Sub
Electronic Arts
Systems: PC
Supports null and full modem connections. Surprisingly the only sub sim that supports modems.

Falcon
Spectrum Holobyte
Systems: PC, Amiga, Macintosh, Atari ST
All versions capable of cross-platform play. All versions support full and null modem connections.

Tracon II
Wesson International/Mindscape
Systems: PC
Compatible with MS Flight Simulator 4.0. Full and null modem capable air traffic control/stress simulator. Windows 3.0 version reviewed in issue 18.

F-16 Combat Pilot
Electronic Arts/Digital Integration
Systems: PC, Amiga, Atari ST
Does not support cross-platform capability. Amiga and Atari ST support null connections only. IBM supports full and null modem play.

Aces Over the Pacific
Dynamix
Systems: PC
Outstanding flight sim that gets even better with modem play

Flight of the Intruder
Spectrum Holobyte
Systems: PC, Amiga, Atari ST
Amiga and Atari ST versions capable of cross-platform play. Supports Null-cable connections only. Nifty flight sim based on crap movie. Reviewed issue 1.

New!

F15 Strike Eagle 111
Microprose
Systems: PC
Supports: COM1 and COM2 only.
Baud rates: 2400, 9600, 19200, 38400. Direct link without modem is also supported, using a null-modem serial cable.

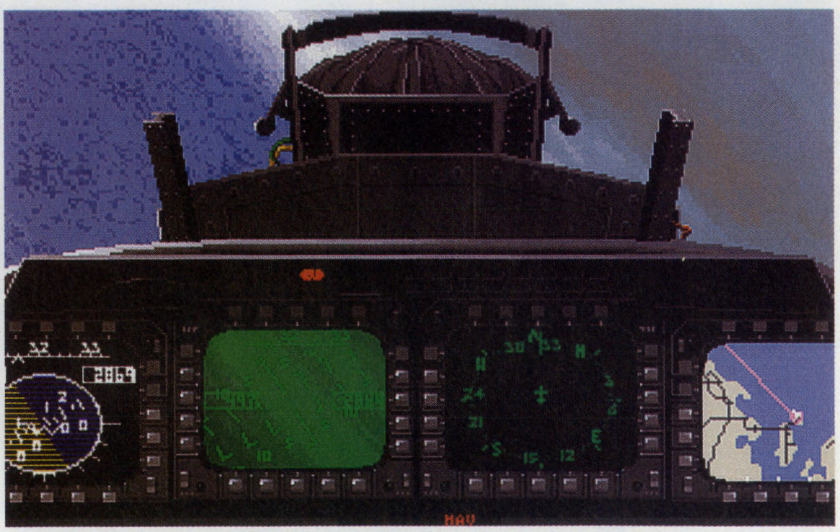
There are three play modes to work with:

- Co-Operative mode, in which two players fly separate planes in an allied mission
- Head-to-Head mode, in which the two players fly planes against each other in a dogfight
- Front-Seat/Back-Seat Mode, where one player plays pilot and the other operates the gunnry (in charge of weapons but can also fly the plane from there) in a single, two-seater F-15E

It is recommended that the two computers playing with or against each other be as matched as possible in CPU speed; a 486/50 and a 386/16 are just not going to synchronize very well. In Co-Op (wingman) mode, a mission is generated with Primary and secondary targets, just like the single mission mode in solo play.

In Front-Seat Back-Seat mode, the player gets a real feel for what it's like to do teamwork in a single plane (primary and secondary missions generated for this one as well; in Head-to-Head mode both players fly similar aircraft against each other (no mission is generated).

A chat mode is enabled during modem play, allowing the two players to send messages to each other, as with **Knights of the Sky**. Included are a series of canned messages (10) which can be sent with the press of a key at any time from either player: 'negative,' 'blind,' 'break left,' 'Break right,' 'chaff/flares,' 'tactical,' 'rejoin,' 'press', 'engaging,' 'RTB' [return to base). Shift-M allows replay of last message if missed in the heat of battle. Once he gets his wires untangled, Commander Crunch will be reporting more fully on all this in our next issue.



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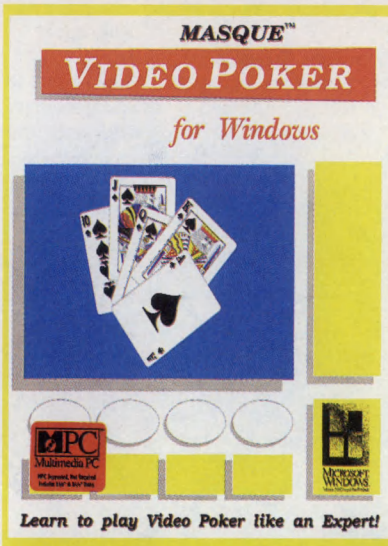

'VIDEO POKER' gives you complete game strategies for Las Vegas and Atlantic City video poker. Expert strategy tables, available in pop-up windows, show which of your current play options yield the best payoff average. Features double down option, practice drills, exciting tournament mode, & rapid computer simulation. **$19**

'MAXX COBRA FLIGHTSTICK' brings together the thrill of a joystick and the versatility of the keyboard. Features molded casing for left or right handers, 7 button pistol grip joystick, 25 programmable functions, exact auto-centering, and true circular directional control. Game port not necessary. **$54**

'ARMADA 2525' is an epic struggle of galactic conquest. Carefully balance military spending and industrial growth. Invest in research and development to gain technological superiority. Seek out and colonize the best star systems as you move your armadas to defend your planets or launch an attack on enemy fleets. **$29**

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Strategy

Wordtris
Spectrum Holobyte
Systems: PC
Supports both null modem and full modem play.
Real time word game.
Reviewed issue 16.

Conquered Kingdoms
QQP
Systems: PC
Superb fantasy strategy game, that but one that is more suited to play by e mail than normal modem play.
Reviewed issue 26

Faces
Spectrum Holobyte
Systems: PC, Amiga, Macintosh
All versions capable of cross-platform play. Full and null modem connections supported. Real time puzzle game.

Empire
Interstel
Systems: PC, Amiga, Atari ST, Macintosh
All versions are cross-platform capable. Seminal strategy game. Turn-based, supporting file transfer over full modem connection. Empire II is due to be published later this year.

Empire De Luxe
New World
Systems: PC
Complete overhaul of classic game. Supports all forms of modem play.

Omega
Origin
Systems: PC, Amiga, Atari ST, Macintosh, C64/128, Apple IIE, C, Plus. Turn based design-your-own-tank game. Ideal for those looking for something to do for the next decade.

Armor Alley
Three Sixty Pacific/EA
Systems: PC, Mac
Mac version supports Appletalk. Fast paced arcade/strategy game.
Reviewed issue 13.

Battle Chess
Interplay/EA
Systems: PC, Apple IIGS, Amiga, Atari ST, Macintosh (B&W only), Mac CD-Rom, PC CD-Rom
Animated chess.

Battle Chess II
Interplay
Systems: PC, Amiga
Animated Chinese chess.
Reviewed issue 3

Checkmate
Interplay
Systems: PC, Mac
Compatible with Battle Chess.
Non animated chess.

Lexicross
Interplay
Systems: PC
Null modem and full modem link supported. Seriously underrated word game in a quiz show format.
Reviewed issue 8.

Armour-Geddon
Psygnosis
Systems: Amiga, Atari ST, PC
Null modem connections only. Real time futuristic strategy/flight sim.
Reviewed issue 10.

Populous
Electronic Arts
Systems: Amiga, PC, Atari ST
All platforms cross-system capable. Overrated real-time game.

Populous II
Systems: ST and Amiga
See Populous *passim*. Reviewed issue 16.

Powermonger
Electronic Arts
Systems: ST, Amiga, PC
Real time conquest now sporting a World War 1 expansion disk.
Reviewed issue 5.

Command HQ
Microprose
Systems: PC
Real time global wargame. Highly recommended for modem play. Reviewed issue 5.

Global Conquest
Microprose
Systems: PC
Fun conquest game that supports up to four players on modems, assuming the right hardware is in place. Reviewed issue 18

Eastern Front
Columbia games
One of the few modem only games (could this start a trend?) based on the boardgame of the same name.

Panzerkrieg for Windows
Blue Chip
Systems: PC's running Windows 3.1 or higher
Modem only. Full review issue 24

The Perfect General
QQP/Ubisoft
Systems: PC, Amiga
Cross-compatible over null and full modem link. Excellent turn-based wargame. See accompanying feature for suitable scenarios
Reviewed issue 13

Fireteam 2200
RAW/Storm
Systems: PC, Amiga
Null and full modem support, cross-compatible real-time futuristic wargame. Now comes with a scenario editor.

Robosport
Maxis
Strange, but likeable game from Maxis which was the subject of a recent tournament via their BBS. One of the few modem games to use the entirely sensible system of simultaneous turns. Other software houses take note.
Reviewed issue

New!

Siege: Dogs of War
Mindcraft
Systems: PC
This new expansion disk as well as adding modem play, also includes the following:
- 6 new castles
- 16 new troop types
- 24 new scenarios

Supports up to 9600 baud, if the modems are of different speeds then the lower rate will take effect.

Computer randomly selects player to choose scenario while the opponent may decide on whether to be the attacker or defender. Null modem play also supported

Sports

Stunt Driver
Spectrum Holobyte
Systems: PC
Supports full and null modem connections.

Vette!
Spectrum Holobyte
Systems: PC, Mac
Cross-system capability. Driving game.

NFL Pro League Football
Interplay
Systems: PC
Gridiron game that supports stats downloading from a BBS.
Reviewed issue 14.

Lotus Turbo Challenge
Gremlin Graphics
Systems: Amiga, ST
Supports null modem link only, but can handle four players via use of a split screen.

David Leadbetter's Greens
Microprose
Systems: PC, Amiga
Amiga version reviewed issue 15. Modem option only on PC version. The only golf game to support this form of play

Tom Landry Strategy Football
Merit Software
Systems: PC, Amiga
Strategy based game ideal for beginners
Reviewed issue 26

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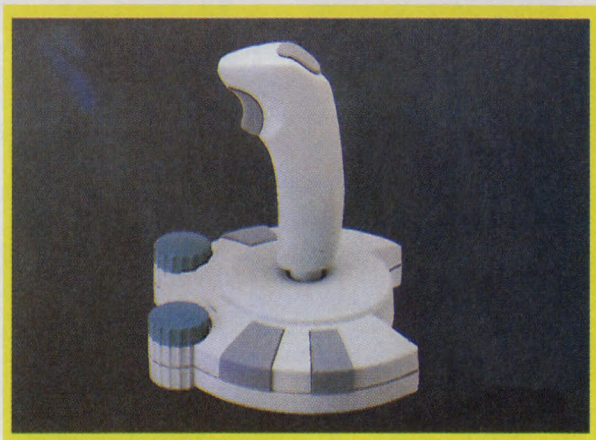

'GEMINI JOYSTICK' features a full size handle, 6 large tactile buttons, dual axis trim adjustors for precision control, turbo fire, 4 stabilizing suction cups, & testing disk. Fully compatible with high speed PC's (PC, XT, AT, 386, 486, & compatibles). **$19**

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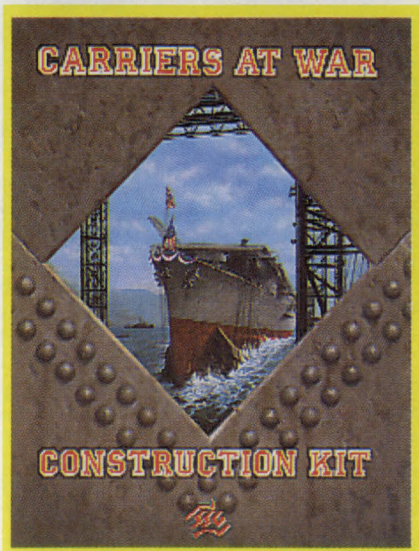

'THE CARRIERS AT WAR CONSTRUCTION KIT' provides an infinitely flexible tool for creating a particular battle or an original scenario. Build ships and planes, organize squadrons, draft maps, position air bases and adjust the artificial intelligence used by the computer. 3 new scenarios included; Wake Island, Guadalcanal, & Tarawa. **$37**

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Access
Systems: PC
Play a round, save, and then send via modem. Opponent load files and 'competes' against remote player.

Second Front/ Western Front/ Carrier Strike/ Pacific War
SSI
Systems: PC and Amiga (first game only)
Save at the end of a turn and send to opponent manually

Conquered Kingdoms
QQP
Systems: PC
E Mail upgrade should be available now

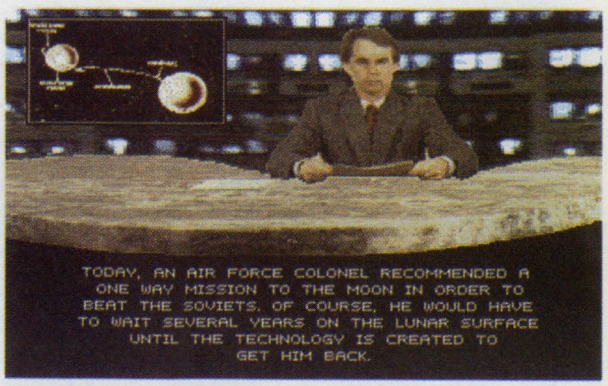
Battles of Destiny
QQP
Systems: PC
Huge global conquest game well suited to this form of play

Empire De Luxe
New World
Systems: PC
Can also be played by direct modem link

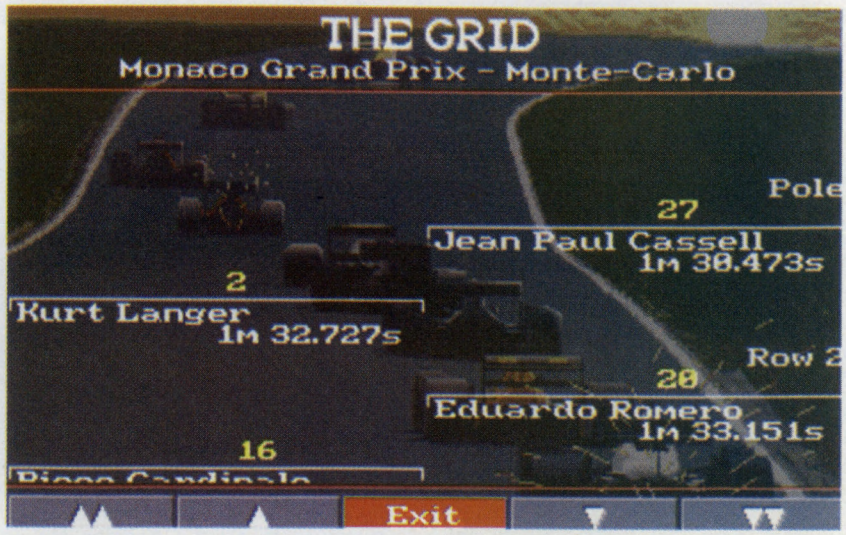
Down the Line

V for Victory: Market Garden (tentative)
April '93
Three Sixty
Systems: PC, Mac
See preview this issue. DOS modem link still tentative, but the Mac version will definitely support Appletalk.

Buzz Aldrin's Race into Space
June '93
Interplay
Systems
PC
Modem play will not be in the basic game but will probably be released as an add-on module


TODAY, AN AIR FORCE COLONEL RECOMMENDED A ONE WAY MISSION TO THE MOON IN ORDER TO BEAT THE SOVIETS. OF COURSE, HE WOULD HAVE TO WAIT SEVERAL YEARS ON THE LUNAR SURFACE UNTIL THE TECHNOLOGY IS CREATED TO GET HIM BACK.
Buzz Aldrin: coming soon

When Two Worlds War
Feb '93
Impressions
Systems: PC, Amiga
Real time space strategy game



World Circuit

World Circuit
Microprose
March '93
Systems: PC, Amiga
The best F1 sim on the market should get even better when the modem option is added

The Perfect General II
Late '93
QQP
Systems: PC
Currently being put together by a new team. Addtional unit types such as aircraft are promised

The Lost Admiral II
Late '93
QQP
Systems: PC
The modem option will be a new addtion. Better graphics are promised, too

Opponents Wanted

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Looking for opponents for **Falcon 3.0**, **Robosport**, **Command HQ**, **The Perfect General**, **Global Conquest**
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New York, NY
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Call Leonard: 206-252 4838.

Burlington, VT
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Everett, WA
Looking for opponents for **Command HQ**, **The Perfect General**, and **Battles of Destiny**

On the Boards

Maxis
510 254 3869 (CA)
Supports: 300-14400, 8N1
Contents: updates, hints, saved cities and creatures for Sim City and Sim Life respectively. Shareware utilities and opponents wanted directory for Maxis games. Each game has its own forum. New: demo of **Sim Life**

Microprose
410 785 1841 (MD)
Supports: 300-14400, 8N1
Contents: tech support, press releases. New: demos for **World Circuit**, **Task Force: 1942**

Mindscape
310 320 5196 (CA)
Supports: 2400, 8N1
Contents: tech support, hints, patches. New: scenarios of **Rules of Engagement**, **Breach 2**, opponents wanted directory for **Siege**

Sierra/Dynamix
209 683 4463 (CA)
Supports: 300 -14400
Contents: press releases, hints, patches, product ordering. New: demo of **Kings Quest VII**, new plays for Dynamix **Front Page Sports Football**

Virgin
714 562 5030 (CA)
Supports: 2400, 8N1
Contents: tech support, product ordering, hints. New: demo of **KGB** and **Kyrandia**

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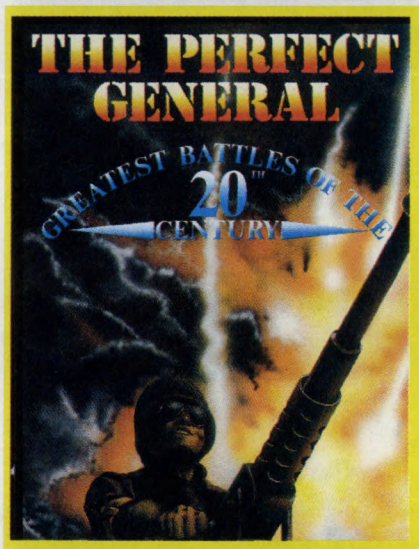
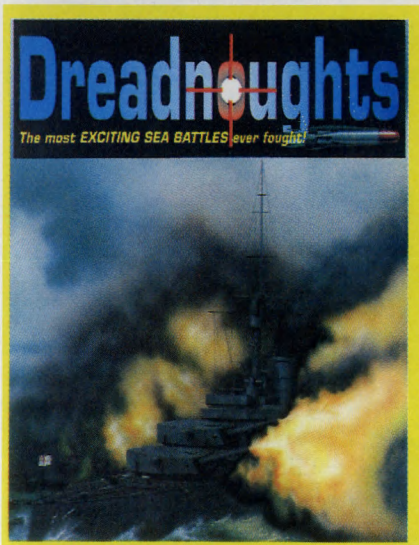
'COMANCHE MAXIMUM OVERKILL' is a glimpse into the future of military avionics and exactingly accurate simulator of the Beoing-Sikorski 66 Comanche Helicopter. Features actual terrain rendered in real time 3D, fly mutiple missions in 1999, complete Thrustmaster support & 256 color VGA graphics. **$46**



'GREATBATTLES OF THE 20TH CENTURY' brings 20 new scenarios for the **Perfect General** game. Includes 1967 & 1973 Suez conflicts, Kursk, The Moscow Push, Stalingrad, Malta, Long Binh Inferno, Crete, Falklands, Inchon, Operation Sea Lion, Pusan Per, Saigon, Bataan, Fulda, Dnepr Br., Guderian Forward, & more. **$23**



DREADNOUGHTS accurately models the looks, specifications and tactics of fighting fleets during the great age of the battleship. Includes 7 scenarios such as; Coronel (1914), Falklands (1914), Jutland (1916) and Dogger Bank (1915). Features a menu interface for entering commands, external 3D view, & hidden movement. **$42**

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Reader Service No. 1

F15 Strike Eagle III Help

Microprose's Quentin Chaney on how to get by and high In F15

Thrustmaster

There is a known problem with using the coolie hat to switch views with an early Thrustmaster joystick that is plugged into a Sound Blaster joystick port. This is specifically mentioned in the Technical Supplement. It is a hardware problem with the joystick and not a problem with the software.

Joystick calibration

The joystick is auto-calibrated in **F15 III.** However, the calibration routine cannot effectively determine the entire dynamic range of each individual's joystick, so it uses a conservative estimate. To properly get the entire range, the user must 'stir' the stick to all four corners when the home screen first comes up. This must also be done each time Alt-J is used, either in the wrapper screens or in the game. Likewise for picking the Recalibrate option from the menu bar in the game.

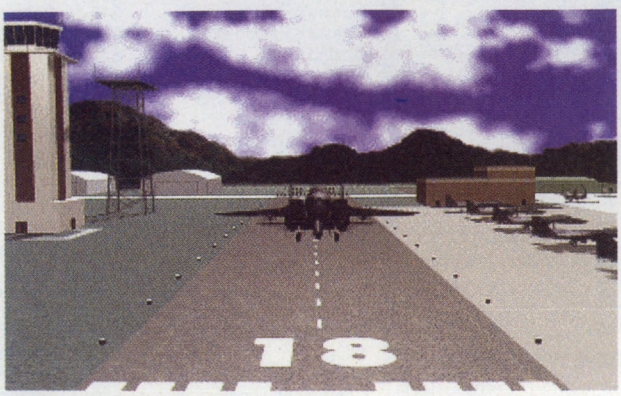
Mouse drift

When mouse drift is encountered, this is usually the result of the mouse pointer being pushed around by a drifting joystick. To correct this, 'stir' the stick to get the entire dynamic range established. If that doesn't fix it, have them type Alt-J to re-center the stick and then stir it.

Lock-ups

For in-game lockups, check the setup using the DOS 'mem' command. Minimum memory limits are described in the technical supplement, and are also checked by the install program and the **F15** program itself. We think that players may be attempting to run the game with not enough conventional memory or EMS.

If the game locks up on the home screen and tries to move the cursor with the mouse or joystick, try the following: when the opening animation is running, continually push the mouse or joystick so as to move the cursor to the top of the screen. Basically the cursor should be at the top of the screen when the home screen finally comes up.



If the game locks up in the Install process where it asks about Modem configuration, a fix has now been established. The Install program was assuming that an EMS manager was present (EMM386) and crashed if there was not one active. There is a new version of the Install program available that handles this condition. A simple work-around is for the user to set the Config.sys up to include the EMS manager before running the old Install program. The new Install is available as Filename F15INS.ZIP and can be obtained from Microprose as well as various bulletin boards.

Speech

Anytime someone gets speech during the opening but not the game, it means there was insufficient memory to load the speech driver or the speech data. This should have been flagged when the user ran the Install program. The driver is loaded into conventional memory and the data is loaded into EMS. Try to run the DOS command 'mem' and check the free EMS and conventional memory. This process and the program memory requirements are described in the Technical Supplement.

Gateway Computers

Gateway users receiving the 'Write Error' messages should, according to Gateway, 'disable the HD1 Block Mode on the system's Phoenix Bios setup screen'.

Boot disk files

Here is an example of the startup files which are created by the Bootdisk program which comes with **F-15 III**.

AUTOEXEC.BAT:

```
@ECHO OFF
PROMPT $P$G
PATH=
LOADHIGH MOUSE.COM
C:
CD \MPS\F15
F15
```

CONFIG.SYS:

```
DOS=HIGH,UMB
DEVICE=HIMEM.SYS
DEVICE=EMM386.EXE ram x=B000-C400 frame=e000
    5136
FILES=20
BUFFERS=20
REM * Next line is for a ProAudio Spectrum Card *
devicehigh=C:\PROAUDIO\MVSOUND.SYS D:3 Q:5 J:0
SHELL=C:\DOS\COMMAND.COM C:\DOS\ /P
```

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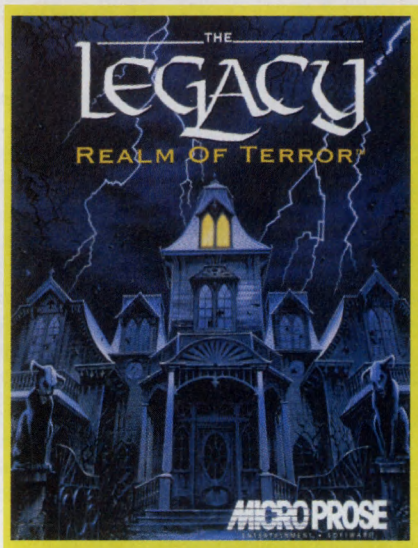
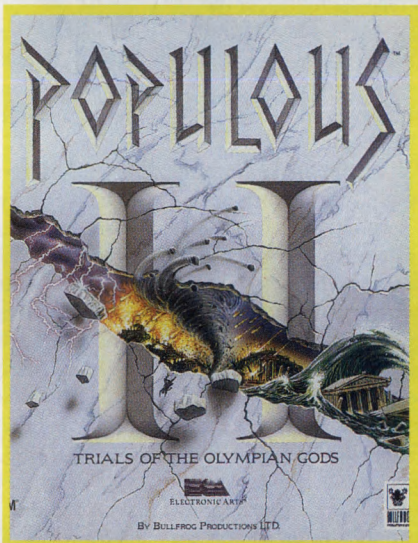
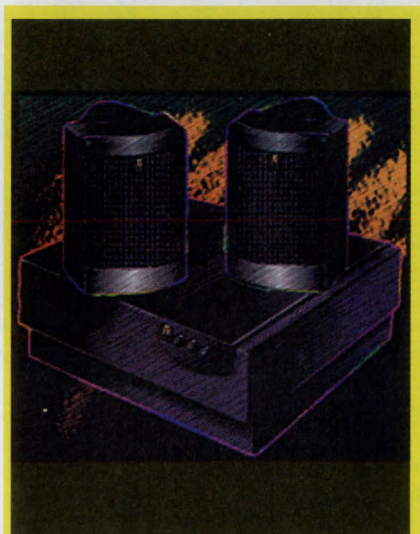


'LEGACY REALM OF TERROR' is a 3D animated horror adventure game. You must find & destroy the entity which has taken control of your house. Features auto-mapping, ten levels with up to 40 rooms per level, detailed yet easy to use magic and combat systems, point-and-click interface, and amazing audio effects. **$41**



In **'POPULOUS 2'** you're locked in cataclysmic combat with the titanic forces of the Olympian Pantheon. Set the oceans to boil, rip the skies with lightning, & hurl downpours of fire to crush Poseidon, Appollo, or Zeus himself. Features 35 animated new powers, 1000 different worlds, a deity creation system, and modem support. **$38**



'POWERED PARTNERS 622' by Acoustic Research do the job of both a speaker and amp. Plug them into any sound source with line level or headphone output: computers, TV's, or keyboards. Features magnetic shielding, a 30 Watt subwoofer, frequency range of 50Hz-20kHz, & volume control. **$239**

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Dear Judith

Memory problems? No magnetic appeal?
Or is it that you're just plum incompatible?
Auntie Judith Weller has all the answers

Dear Judith,

I just bought a brand new mouse and mouse driver which is supposed to be Microsoft compatible. Yet it does not work with many of my games. Help!

Your mouse and mouse driver are Microsoft compatible, but for many games compatibility is not enough. Very often these other mouse drivers will contain code to exploit certain design feature in that particular mouse. The code to implements these features may cause problems with some games. If your Microsoft compatible mouse is not working with some of your favorite games, try using the mouse driver that came with your copy of either Windows or MS-DOS. That should solve your problem.

Dear Judith,

What are the best values to use for the files and buffer statement in Config.Sys. The boot disk maker that came with my games sets those values at 20 each, yet my game will not load.

With today's new hardware and mega games, 20 is certainly the lowest acceptable value. But for some configurations that is too low. If you have set up your boot diskette according to the specifications, and the game still does not load, I would try upping those numbers. I keep mine set at 35 and have had no problems. However, if by the time you reach 50 and the game still does not load, it is time to call Tech-Support

Dear Judith,

The Installation instructions for my game say that it requires 585,000 bytes of free conventional memory. I have 585,199 bytes of conventional memory free but the game locks up right at the beginning. What gives?

No one should ever take those numbers as set in concrete. At best these numbers represent the lower number of bytes that tech support could use and still get the game to run. While thesenumbers obviously worked for the particular machine that they were tested on, that does not mean they will work on your machine. All hardware is not created equal. I use these numbers only a minimum guidelines and then make sure that I exceed them by anywhere from 5000 to 10000 bytes, if not more. This has saved me no end of trouble. The way game sizes are today, it would be probably safer to aim for 610,000 bytes of free conventional memory - better to err by having too much than by having too little.

Dear Judith,

I am having a problem getting the sound effects of the game to work. The introductory music plays just fine. But once the game starts, the sound effects vanish. The notice on the box specifically states that my sound card is supported. Why can't I get the sound effects during game play?

Many of the newer games are loading their sound effects into EMS memory. Very often in the installation instructions you will see words like this: 'to utilize all the features of the game.' The features they are talking about are 'sound effects.' Companies realize that games are getting very large and require extensive resources to run. Therefore so that the game will still run on older configurations some companies are loading what they consider to be 'optional features' into EMS, and then let the bulk of the game run in under 600,000 bytes of conventional memory. Sound effects are frequently one of the items considered 'optional' for game play. After all you don't have to hear the Monster growl, to see and kill him. Also, in order to speed up the games on older machines, users are given the option of reducing the amount of detail that can be seen in the graphics. Not only will this make the game play faster on older machines, and it will also reduce the amount of memory needed to run the game.

Dear Judith,

I am having difficulty getting my new game installed. Every time I insert disk 3, I get thrown back to the DOS prompt with a message about a bad CRC. What the hell is a bad CRC?

Watch your language, please. CRC stands for cyclical redundancy check. This is a hardware problem. It very often indicates that there may be mangled data on the disk. You can try to save yourself a trip back to the software store by attempting to make a copy of the badinstall diskette. Sometimes the disk error is not located in a critical data field. First try the DOS DISKCOPY command to see if DOS will copy it to a brand new diskette. Every time you get the 'abort, fail, retry' message - keep typing retry for a half a dozen times or so and see if it can be read. If that fails, allocate a new directory on your hard drive, and see if you can copy the individual files from the diskette to the directory. If that is successful then copy the files from the directory back to a new diskette and use that diskette to finish your install. A third solution, is to try and make a copy of the diskette on a friend's PC. Often the alignment of the heads will be such that they will be able to perform the copy. If all else fails, it's back to the software store for an exchange.

Got a problem? Then why not drop Agony Aunt Judith Weller a line c/o
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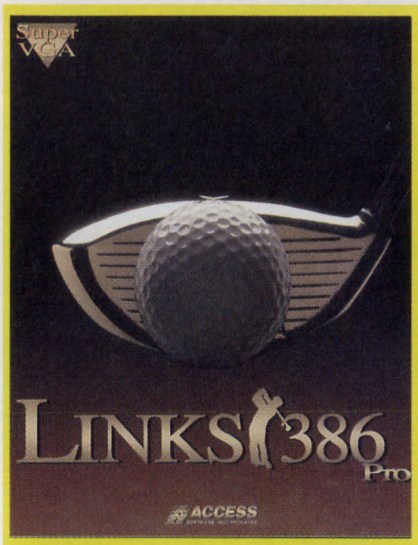

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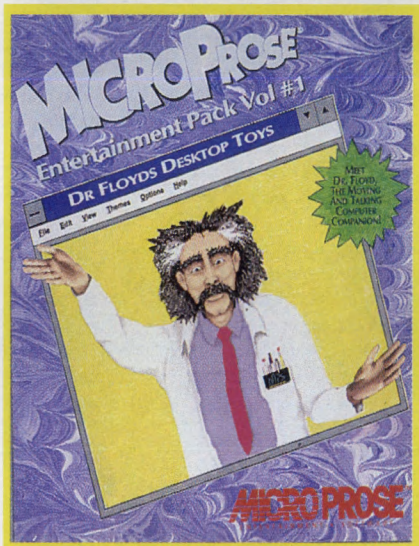

'DR FLOYD'S DESKTOP TOYS' is a collection of short, fun diversions for the computer. Features cryptograms - the time honored code breaking game, Web Spinners - build the largest spider web, Pentominoes - a puzzle game to exactly fit a number of blocks into a particular shape, Wallop, Snark Hunt, & Kye. **$26**

'SECOND CONFLICT' is a game of interstellar strategy & conquest for windows. Control all aspects of the economy, military, and civilian population. Allocate resources to produce battleships, planetary defenses, stealth ships, transports and missiles. Features multiple human & computer players, & a scenario editor. **$34**

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Crap shoot

Please can you help. I have saved my hard earned money and am now in the process of buying my first IBM PC compatible. Having bought a lot of PC mags I am still unsure which PC is best for me. Before I spend my money I would like a bit of advice. The machine I have chosen is a Commodore Powerline 486/33, 4 meg of RAM, 1 meg of VRAM, 50 meg hard drive. I would also like you to recommend a soundcard.

Being a **'Finest Hour'** fan, my first game for the PC has got to be **SWOTL**. I can't wait to blow the crap out of a B17!

S Bell
Southend-on Sea
UK

Generally you can expect to pay over the top for brand name machines, even though they offer no more than the clones. If you want to save a bit of your hard earned dosh then go for a no-name. The specs for the Commodore machine you mention are hardly awe inspiring. 4 meg of RAM is really the bare minimum for a 486 machine, while the 50 meg hard drive is truly pitiful. Don't forget that to access RAM above 640K you'll need to obtain a memory manager such as Quarterdeck's QEMM

Unless you're planning to compose a symphony on the PC, the best soundcard would probably be the Soundblaster Pro. It's the best supported and also offers digitized speech should you wish to hear in-flight proclamations

Whoops

Enclosed is a review for **Star Control II: The Ur-Quan Masters**, published by Accolade. It is tentatively titled Star Control II Review. Please consider this manuscript for publication in *Computer Gaming World.*

Dave Pyron
Florence, MT 59833

Never heard of 'em

Pacific rift

The review SSI's **Pacific War** in your February issue prompted me to buy my first copy of your magazine. I enjoyed the magazine but (here it comes) I feel compelled to comment on the review. Page 21 of the game manual describes the ability to change aircraft production types. This was omitted from Mr Van Valer's review. His 'what if...' concerning the game mechanics of industrial production is misleading. The woeful industrial base of Japan was no match for the US.

The 'boardgame ancestors' of **Pacific War** could not solve the problem of a historical simulation that gave the Japanese any chance at victory. The reprinted magazine article included with the game manual, points out that the playability of the game lies in correcting historical mistakes made by the Japanese in the use of their early air superiority and their excellent submarine arm. Any computer controlled Japanese side will quickly establish this fact.

I thought that the game provided a wealth of player aids. I could not understand your reviewers request for additional binary bells and whistles, except, perhaps, for a separate map which I agree would have been a nice addition. I also believe that the man-hour cost of a development team would certainly have driven up the price of the software and done more to lessen the appeal of the game, rather than enhance it.

Some experimentation and a judicious reading of the manual surely can't be much to ask in comparison to the cost of an intuitive interface.

Chester Morrison
Panama City, FL 32401

*John Van Valer replies: **Pacific War** does not solve the ability of the Japanese to win either. The victory conditions have, as Gary Grigsby points out, been fudged to focus on the overall Japanese status by the end of 1944. The overall ability of the Japanese side to win in either a boardgame or computer simulation of the Pacific War does rest heavily on the Japanese production mix, in addition to military objectives and performance. **Pacific War** does allow experimentation with aircraft production but with an historical production mix and availability - essentially a semi-flexible reinforcement schedule. There is no research and development system, as there are with many boardgames.*

*Additional enhancements to the game could only make it more appealing to the general gaming audience. Three Sixty Pacific, for example, has proven that such enhancements to computer wargames can be significant and also help the game sell. For a $79.95 (SRP) game, I think that the customer should expect more than what was included with **Pacific War**. Given a single choice, however, I agree that most players would sacrifice the chrome for more extensive and concise documentation.*

Drop in the bucket

I am an avid wargamer and military historian. I recently read your article entitled Wargames in issue 27. I was very disappointed you even mentioned the game **High Command**, which I has recently purchased and returned to Colorado Creations. It may be one of the few grand strategy wargames for the computer, but it has so many bugs and playability problems that I found it hard to believe that you would even include it in your discussion. The problem with airstrikes and naval bombardment was just a drop in the bucket.The latest version, 1.1, has corrected some of the problems but is still not playable. the combat unit strength values are for the most part not even in sync with the values stated in the manual. Colorado Creations has no intention of addressing these oversights in the months to come. It seems to me that in the future it would make sense not to include games with such horrendous problems and oversights when discussing the 'best games' of the year.

Christopher Large
Hartford, CT 06105

Peter Szymonik replies:
Version 1.1 of High Command corrected a number of problems, and it is on this version that the game's inclusion in the 'best of' feature was based. High Command's designers were on GEnie almost daily listening to feedback and soliciting suggestions and comments. Before Three Sixty Pacific bought the game from them, they promised to update and re-write the entire manual and to add naval air patrol mission types to the game. But rather than making their customers wait a year or more for a revised and finished VGA product, they sold it to Three Sixty for further development.

Seen but not seen

Comanche: Maximum Overkill. I received and installed it on my 486/33 which has 8 meg of RAM. When I try to run the program I get a sys error. I did what their manual says but I just get a blank screen. No sound, no nothing. I call NovaLogic's tech line but it's busy. And busy for weeks. I called a hundred times and even took time off work so I could try before 11am. I dialled the number. Ring, ring. Someone picks it up but then hangs up. I try again and the line is busy. And busy for the rest of the day. I call the main office and tell them I am very disappointed and want to return the game. He says I have to return it to where I bought it from. So I did not experience the 'what you see is what you get' that you said I would in issue 26. I will not be buying any more of Nova Logic's products in the future.

Michael Windom
Lindenhurst, NY 11757

Your letter has been forwarded on to NovaLogic

Star crossed

I recently purchased Mindcraft's **Star Legions** and very quickly became addicted to it. I just as quickly discovered that I couldn't advance very far because of a major bug that causes the game to freeze when demanding a planet's surrender and/or when accepting an offer of surrender. I've called Mindcraft's customer service line and I'm now waiting for the program upgrade. However, since I discovered the bug I've read two magazine reviews and strategy articles that make it sound like the reviewer was able to advance to the highest rank possible and achieve the highest award possible. Your magazine's tips article by Dean Bakeris (issue 27) is one of these, intimating that he received the 'Hero of the Empire Gold' Skull decoration.

If the first version of the game has such a major bug in it, how is it that reviewers have been able to finish the game? Also, though the people at Mindcraft assure me that the upgrade should now be ready, how much longer should I have to wait for a bug-free version of the game?

Michael Liebert
Joliet, IL 60435

The problem you describe is specific to the number of units on the ground at that time, and not a generic problem. Random crashes can also be caused by lack of memory. Mindcraft say an upgrade has now been sent out to registered users such as yourself.

Sick and tired? Who isn't? Get it all off your chest by having a good old moan at us. Write to: Rebound, Strategy Plus, 217 South Union St, Burlington, VT 05401

Letters may be edited for reasons of space

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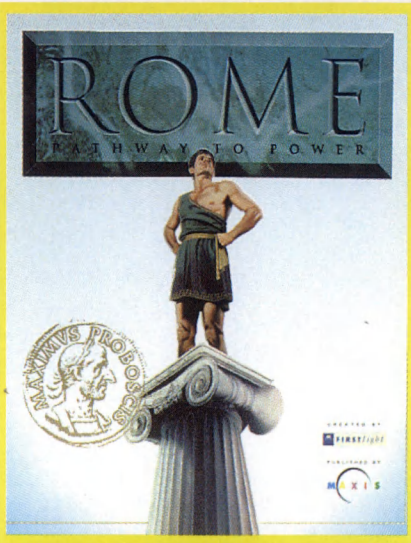

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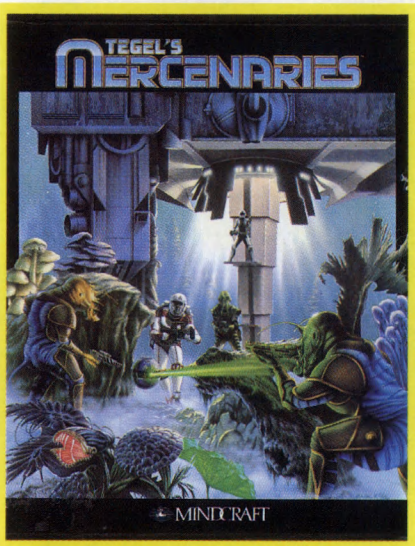

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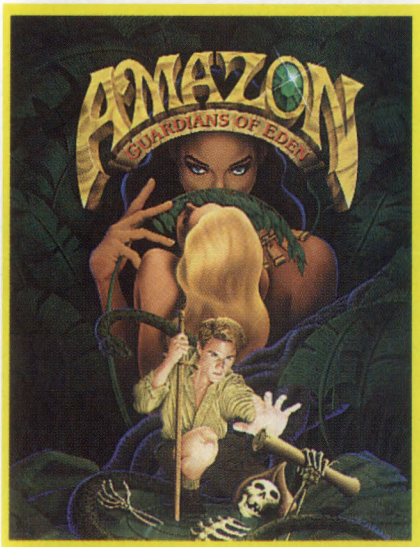

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